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THE END OF THE  
IRISH PARLIAMENT



# THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

BY

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LONDON  
EDWARD ARNOLD

1911

42728

## PREFACE

THANKS to the invaluable labours of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, a great number of the most important documents relating to the Parliamentary history of Ireland during the last thirty years of the eighteenth century—the period covered by this book—are now readily accessible to the student. The Dropmore Papers, the Carlisle Papers, the Rutland Papers, and the Charlemont Papers, together with the first four volumes of the Life and Letters of Lord Castlereagh and the Correspondence of Lord Charlemont and Lord Cornwallis, cover the greater part of the ground and furnish original authority for the events of successive Viceroyalties, especially from Temple to Cornwallis.

The Viceroyalty of Lord Townshend, which I have chosen as my starting-point, is not so thoroughly documented as some of the others, but here I was fortunate enough to obtain access to the unpublished papers of George Earl Macartney, who, as Sir George Macartney, had been Lord Townshend's Chief Secretary during some critical years. Lord Macartney, who had been a special envoy to Russia and who was afterwards Ambassador to China, retained copies of all the important

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letters and despatches passing between Dublin Castle and Downing Street during his term of office, and I have found several in this collection that cannot be traced in the Record Office or elsewhere. Of great value is the "most secret" despatch of April 21, 1769, from Lord Townshend to Lord Weymouth, from which I have quoted at considerable length in the chapter on Lord Townshend and His Difficulties. It is, I think, the most complete exposition of the Parliamentary system in Ireland under the rule of the Undertakers that has been preserved, and, so far as I am aware, it has never seen the light from the time it was written till the present day. I have to express my great obligations to Mr. C. G. Macartney of Lissanoure Castle, co. Antrim, the present representative of Lord Macartney's family, who courteously placed at my disposal the papers covering the period of Lord Townshend's viceroyalty. Some of the personal papers have already been published in "*Our First Ambassador to China . . . From Hitherto Unpublished Correspondence and Documents*," by Helen H. Robbins (London, John Murray, 1908), and it is much to be desired that Mrs. Robbins would supplement that valuable work by the publication of further selections from the documents preserved by her distinguished relative.

The secondary authorities for the period are very numerous and of varying value. "*The English in*

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Ireland in the Eighteenth Century" and the "History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century" must, of course, be consulted throughout. Mr. Froude and Mr. Lecky were untiring in their industry and thoroughness, and they left very little for others to glean. I have made no attempt to follow them or to re-write the history of the period—my object has been rather to detach and bring into relief the events connected with the "decline and fall" of the Irish Parliament. Another writer who must be mentioned is the late Mr. Litton Falkiner, whose untimely death was an irreparable loss to the cause of Irish historical research. The other writers consulted are numbered by hundreds, but when the wheat is separated from the chaff the result is not conspicuous.

In the introductory chapter I have indicated a few of the leading points dealt with in the body of the book. This necessarily involves a certain amount of repetition, and some readers may resent the appearance of the same facts twice within the covers of a single book. But I was anxious that those to whom the history of the period is new should have a concise statement at the outset of some of the governing facts of the situation in Ireland towards the close of the eighteenth century.

With some hesitation I decided to omit—in most cases—the references to authorities. A long series of footnotes is of no assistance to the general reader,

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and the critical student will have no difficulty in referring to the volumes of correspondence and the other authorities on which my statements are based.

J. R. F.

*May 1, 1911.*

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THE writer who ventures on the slippery ground of Irish History is not without his warnings. Newman's complaint when in Ireland was that he was expected to say the thing that was pleasant rather than the thing that was true, and later authors have had to learn the same painful lesson. The reason, naturally, is that given by Lord Rosebery when he points out that the Irish question has never passed into history because it has never passed out of politics ; whilst Mr. Bryce, another writer who is eminently qualified to speak, having won distinction alike in the field of public affairs and of letters, warns the would-be author that "his pages are likely to be searched less for the sake of obtaining trustworthy information and just views than of finding arguments which may be used in current controversy."

The "incautious explorer" is further warned by Lord Rosebery that if he comes too near the crater he "finds the treacherous surface yield and himself plunged in the fiery marl of contemporary party strife." All the more reason, of course, for faithful investigation and outspoken judgment upon subjects whose difficulty is their attraction, and whose party significance does not in the least detract from their historical interest.

In endeavouring to trace the story of the fall of the Irish Parliament and its causes, the first difficulty is to fix upon some period or date as the

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turning-point from which the definite trend of events may be reckoned. In fixing on the Vice-royalty of Lord Townshend (1767-1772) as his starting-place the present writer hopes that he has found a judicious mean between the somewhat remote days of King and Molyneux and the more modern and strident activities of Flood and Grattan. The period of Chesterfield presented many attractions, and if his Viceroyalty had been prolonged, or if he had received any intelligent backing from headquarters, it might have marked an epoch ; as it was, it proved only a passing phase—a man of genius and insight throwing into relief the long line of Swift's “boobies” and then disappearing to make the darkness seem deeper than ever.

Lord Townshend was the first resident Viceroy ; with him began the experiment of the direct administration of Irish affairs as opposed to administration through the Undertakers, the dominant oligarchy who undertook the trouble—and drew the profits—of mismanaging the country in the Chief Governor's name. The first Georges were, in domestic politics, little more than the puppets of the half-dozen great Whig families who upheld the Parliamentary Constitution as against Jacobite intrigue. George III. turned over a new leaf when he resolved to “be a King” on his own account and to break the bonds in which the House of Hanover was enmeshed. In the process he made a good deal of history in two hemispheres, and it was inevitable that Ireland should come into the story, for nowhere had the power of the Crown become more utterly contemptible, in Church and in State, than in that unhappy country which for centuries never saw its kings but as invaders.

As for the Church, Swift's tale of the imported

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bishops will perhaps bear quotation once more. "Excellent and moral men," he says, "have been selected upon every occasion of vacancy. But it unfortunately has uniformly happened that as these worthy divines crossed Hounslow Heath, on their road to Ireland to take possession of their bishopricks, they have been regularly robbed and murdered by the highwaymen frequenting that common, who seize upon their robes and patents, come over to Ireland, and are consecrated bishops in their stead." And as for the civil Governors, Whately's satire had had its serious application, then and earlier. "People who think it easy to govern Ireland," says the Archbishop, who had seen and studied many Viceroys and Chief Secretaries close at hand, "because it is poor, half-civilised, and full of ignorance, are like the medical student who imagined that he had learned enough of medicine to doctor very little children." Mr. Goldwin Smith, who also knew Dublin Castle in Whately's time and from more than one point of view, has told how he endeavoured to qualify one long-forgotten Chief Secretary for his task of "settling the Irish question" by taking him to the Adelphi Theatre to see "The Colleen Bawn"; whilst a more recent official has confessed to seeking inspiration for the same task from a hearing of "John Bull's Other Island"—or was it "The Playboy of the Western World"? Neither under the Irish Parliament nor yet under the Union were such statesmanlike methods likely to be crowned with any great measure of success.

The Irish Parliament itself, as will be seen, passed through many phases before it disappeared; but what most of all strikes the "explorer," cautious or otherwise, is how very little this peculiar

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institution had to do, for good or for evil, with the bulk of the Irish people. In fact, the point that has to be kept in mind throughout is that the Dublin Parliament never was, in any possible sense of the word, an “Irish” Parliament. Wherever they have settled, the pioneers of the English race have brought with them the traditions of representative and deliberative government, and in due time the members of the English colony in Ireland established their Parliament. But in so doing they no more dreamt of providing a Parliament for the “Irish enemy” than did the New England colonists for the Indians who had inhabited the territories lying round Massachusetts Bay. To them the native Irish outside the Pale were public enemies, and were treated as such. During the course of years, no doubt, such of the Irish chiefs as accepted English titles or otherwise showed due signs of “civility” had their place in the infrequent meetings of this rudimentary Parliament, a body which, under Poyning’s law, had little more power than to say “Ay” or “No” to the decrees of the English Privy Council. But the overwhelming bulk of the Irish people stood aloof and lived their own lives.

With the Reformation came fresh causes of difference, and the Elizabethan wars, the rising of 1641 with its grim Cromwellian sequel, and the brief but decisive Williamite war defined the lines of separation once for all. From 1666 in Charles II.’s reign till the first of William and Mary in 1692 no legal Parliament\* was held in Ireland—that of James II. in 1689 being regarded as null and void

\* While this book was in the printers’ hands, “Revolutionary Ireland and its Settlement,” by Dr. R. H. Murray, has appeared. Besides other interesting and important matter, Dr. Murray’s book contains much that is of value concerning the early Irish Parliament.

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—and a stringent oath and declaration now excluded Roman Catholics. Before the battle of Aughrim, if the Chevalier Wogan \*—Tyrconnell's nephew—is to be believed, King William offered to Tyrconnell, as representing the Irish leaders, the free exercise of their religion, with half the churches, half the civil and military employments, and half their ancient properties. These offers, we are told, were rejected “with universal contempt,” and it is doubtful, in any case, whether William could have forced the ratification of such liberal terms on that “foolish and knavish” Irish Parliament which tore up the Articles of Limerick.

The Irish Parliament thus became narrowly sectarian, for not only were the representatives of the Roman Catholics expressly excluded, but even the members of the Scottish colony in the North were for the greater part of the century proscribed and excluded from equal civil rights by an obnoxious test which no loyal member of the Scottish Church could take. Readers of Swift will not require to be reminded that of the two the Dean hated and feared the Scottish Church in the North much more than that of the majority in the rest of the island. “Popery,” † as he puts it with the engaging candour that characterises all his polemical writings, “I look upon to be the most absurd system of Christianity professed by any nation.” “The Popish priests,” however, as he says in another place, ‡ “are all registered, and without permission (which I hope will not be granted) they can have no successors; so that the Protestant clergy will find it, perhaps, no difficult

\* Wogan to Swift, February 27, 1732.

† Swift, “The Presbyterians’ Plea of Merit.”

‡ Swift, “Letter Concerning the Sacramental Test.”

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matter to bring great numbers over to the Church." The Scots, on the other hand, were proud and aggressive, and thus, though few in numbers, were a constant danger to the Ascendency, whose interests Swift so jealously watched and guarded. "If a man were to have his choice, either a lion at his foot, bound fast with three or four chains, his teeth drawn out and his claws pared to the quick, or an angry cat in full liberty at his throat, he would," says Swift, "take no long time to determine." As Mr. Lecky remarks, a body so constituted, with the Bishops predominant in the Upper House, resembled rather an Irish Church Synod than an Irish National Parliament.

Nor was this situation materially altered at any subsequent time during the existence of the Irish Parliament. A series of Relief Acts, culminating in that of 1793, were passed under pressure from England; but although in this latter year Roman Catholics were admitted to the vote in overwhelming numbers under the "forty shilling freehold" franchise, no one dreamt of their exercising the vote except for the purpose of swelling the retinue of their landlord on polling day. It was thus possible for Lucas and Flood and Charlemont to profess the most ardent Irish patriotism whilst at the same time refusing all share in the government of Ireland to the majority of its inhabitants, and for Grattan at the height of his power and influence to declare for Catholic emancipation whilst assuring his fellow-religionists that his ideas in that direction only extended so far as that liberty was "consistent with your ascendancy and an addition to the strength and freedom of the Protestant community." Such things may seem a mystery to the twentieth-century reader, but they

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must be realised if we are to begin to understand the meaning of much that was said and done in connection with the eighteenth-century Irish Parliament. "The distinction between legend and history," Max Müller tells us, "is modern"—so modern, indeed, that it has not been reached or realised by the majority of those who, strong in their patriotic ignorance, have painted the Irish Parliament in "the bright colours of their own fancy."

Nationality, of course, in its modern sense, never had, and never could have, a place in a Parliament whose essential and fundamental condition of existence was the suppression of a nationality by an Oligarchy. That that Oligarchy should have the right to divide the spoils of Irish politics without the interference of England—therein consisted the patriotism of the Irish Parliament. A body so constituted, needless to say, is not amenable to the ordinary rules of constitutional procedure. In times of extreme danger it would inevitably rally to the British Government as its only protection alike against a foreign foe and against the vast majority of the populace, still filled with sullen resentment against their conquerors. But in ordinary times its members, who had no share in appointing the Executive and but little in initiating legislation, had no interest in supporting one Administration rather than another ; and in course of time a considerable group of members realised that their support was a thing to be bought and sold. In England, under Walpole, a somewhat similar state of things had prevailed, and there the cure came in time by natural means. Such a cure was not possible in the Ireland of the Oligarchy. The boroughs were the corrupt element in Ireland as in

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England, and when Pitt in 1784 proposed a reform of Grattan's Parliament he naturally thought of strengthening the county representation as against that of the boroughs. But the Viceroy, the Duke of Rutland, wrote back in alarm that the system of Parliament in Ireland "did not bear the smallest resemblance to representation," and that for his part "he did not see how quiet and good government could exist under any more popular mode." Parliament, he said, was against the admission of the Catholics, and the whole question was "difficult and dangerous to the last degree."\*

Far-sighted men had long since studied the question and its difficulties, and had advocated the Union of the two Parliaments as the real cure. In Charles II.'s time Sir William Petty, in his "Political Anatomy of Ireland," argued that things had been going from bad to worse for five hundred years, and that the only remedy was a "thorough union of interests upon natural and lasting principles." In 1698 Molyneux, who may be taken as the father of all Irish parliamentary patriotism, and whose "Case of Ireland Stated" had the honour of being burnt by the common hangman on account of its outspoken advocacy of Ireland's legislative independence, discussed this alternative. Ireland, he argued, should not be bound by laws made in England, because Ireland was not represented in the English Parliament. "That is a happiness we can hardly hope for," said Molyneux, and it was in the absence of such a happy solution of the difficulty that he insisted that the Irish Parliament should, at least, be left free to control its own destinies. In 1703 the Irish Lords and Commons petitioned Queen

\* Rutland to Pitt, June 16, 1784.

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Anne in favour of parliamentary Union, and again in 1707 the Irish House of Commons, in congratulating the Queen on the Union with Scotland, added: "May God put it into your royal heart to add greater strength and lustre to your crown by a yet more comprehensive Union." And Mr. Lecky, in a striking chapter, cites Montesquieu and Adam Smith and a long line of philosophers and statesmen who all through the century had spoken in the same sense. But England has always been hesitating and timid in the matter of reforms for Ireland, and it was only when under the menace of a grave internal crisis, combined with the imminence of a foreign invasion, that she definitely realised that, in Lord Rosebery's words, the dual system was "a vulture gnawing at the vitals of the Empire."

The American Revolution, combined with the French and Spanish war, led to what can only be called the collapse of civil government in Ireland. England had no sufficient force to protect the Irish coasts, and the Irish Parliament, with no moral force at its back, was utterly powerless. New men and new ideas were coming to the front, and the debating society of the Oligarchy became little better than a laughing-stock. The Northern colony, ill-governed, persecuted, and thoroughly discontented, were filled with the same Republican ideals as their close kinsfolk in the American colonies. Yet they promptly sprang to arms in tens of thousands when a French invasion was threatened. Their memory of King James's French invasion and their dread of "Popery, brass money, and wooden shoes" was too recent and too vivid for any hesitation on that point. The danger over, the Volunteers became politicians and demanded the root-and-branch reform of the Dublin Parliament—

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the special object at all times of their dislike and contempt. A Protestant democratic Parliament on American lines was their first ideal, and but for the return of Burgoyne and his troops after the peace of 1783 they would probably have secured it by force or the threat of force. "Grattan's Parliament," which soon proved a quite unworkable constitutional experiment, was the only outcome of the Volunteer crisis, and it was perilously near to becoming its victim.

The French Revolution threw Ireland into another convulsion. The Volunteers, disbanded after the failure of their attempt to intimidate Grattan's Parliament, were re-formed on a more turbulent and menacing basis, and Grattan himself, who had hailed them as the "armed property of the nation," now taunted them with being its "armed beggary." The United Irishmen were organised by Wolfe Tone on a distinctly revolutionary basis, and a French invasion, for the purpose of completely separating Ireland from England, was formally invited. An ill-organised and wholly abortive peasant insurrection, which was smothered in bloodshed—principally at the hands of Irish Militia and Yeomanry—and three several attempts at French invasion followed, and the close of the eighteenth century found Ireland in much the same condition as the end of the seventeenth, when the Irish Parliament petitioned for Union with England.

But there were many cross-currents. It was now the English statesmen, headed by Pitt and engaged in a life-and-death struggle with France, who regarded an incorporate Union with Ireland as an imperative necessity. It was the unrepresentative and incompetent Irish Parliament that held back. The old Oligarchy, against whose misrule the Rebellion was

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directed, had begun to regain courage and to imagine that nothing was changed. The Northern Republicans, disillusioned, divided, and disheartened, had given up playing at Revolution, and had resumed their industries. The racial and revolutionary outburst in the South was also extinguished, and if only the soldiers and militia continued to get a free hand with the wretched people, the Dublin Parliament, always crying for more bloodshed, was content to go on as before. But the cup was full. Lord Cornwallis, the Viceroy, Lord Clare, the Lord Chancellor, and Lord Castlereagh, the Chief Secretary, were determined that the Union should be carried ; and carried it was by the usual means by which majorities had always been secured in the Irish Parliament.

The views of such a Parliament, whether against or for the Union, were, needless to say, in no sense an indication of the wishes of the majority of the Irish people. Apart from the old Ascendency party, there were some, like Grattan, who were honestly and fanatically opposed to the Union ; others acquiesced in it as something undesirable, but inevitable after what the country had gone through. Still more were “open to terms,” and as usual withheld their support till they saw what they could make by it. Several of those who had headed the Republican movement in the North hailed the Union with satisfaction as the best means of escape from the sham Parliament against which they had conspired and rebelled. “In that measure,” wrote Hamilton Rowan,\* one of the most influential and high-minded of the Ulster leaders, “I see the downfall of one of the most corrupt assemblies, I believe, that ever existed,

\* “Autobiography of Archibald Hamilton Rowan,” p. 340.

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and instead of an empty title a source of industrious enterprise for the people, and the wreck of feudal aristocracy. . . . It takes a feather out of the great man's cap ; but it will, I think, put many a guinea into the poor man's pocket."

By far the most remarkable and unanimous declaration of opinion on behalf of the Union was, however, that of the heads of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland. A few of the priests went with their people into the Rebellion and paid the penalty. But the higher clergy and the Bishops had early been horrified at the excesses of the French Revolution—the direct and immediate progenitor of the United Irish movement. The spoliation of the Church, the massacres of priests, the attack on the Temporal Power of the Pope—acts condoned or hailed with delight by the United Irishmen—were not calculated to secure sympathy from the Irish Bishops for the French Revolution and its offshoot in Ireland. That many of the people were almost as ready for revolution in Ireland as in France was a fixed conviction, and the spread of "French principles" in Church and in State was everywhere dreaded by the Hierarchy.

The general result was that the Roman Catholic Hierarchy declared strongly in favour of the Union, and although Grattan denounced them as "a band of prostituted men," he could not shake their influence. The Archbishop of Dublin and the Archbishop of Tuam were specially demonstrative in their support, and the Bishop of Waterford declared that he would prefer a "union with the Beys and Mamelukes of Egypt" to being any longer left under "the iron rod of the Mamelukes of Ireland." A vacancy in Kerry resulted in the triumphant return of the Unionist candidate, his

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chief supporters being the Catholic clergy and the uncle and the brother of Daniel O'Connell. And an election in Newry had a similar and even more significant result. The vacancy was caused by the dismissal of Sir John Parnell, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who opposed the Union, and the appointment of Isaac Corry, a supporter of the Union, in his place. Corry came up for re-election in Newry, and the Bishop of Dromore wrote in triumph that his people "stuck together like the Macedonian phalanx, and with ease were able to turn the scale" in favour of the Union.

These facts will be found in greater detail in the chapter devoted to the Union. For the present we may close with the testimony of a leading Catholic layman. When, in 1803, a movement was started for Repeal of the Union, Denys Scully published a pamphlet entitled "An Irish Catholic's Advice to his Brethren," in which he said : " You see that the faction whom you dread have changed sides and are become the most discontented body in the country ; that they are become most clamorous against the British connection because it has clipped their monopoly ; that they are incensed by the late Union, which has demolished, not our Parliament, for we had no share in it, but their Club-house."

## CHAPTER I

### THE EARLY IRISH PARLIAMENT AND ITS METHODS

JAMES I. complains that when he came to England to undertake the government of his new kingdom he found himself confronted in Parliament with “a kind of beasts called Undertakers,” who caused him much trouble and vexation. And when in 1767 the Marquis of Townshend was sent over by George III. to bring the long-neglected Government of Ireland into something like order, he found a tribe of Undertakers more firmly entrenched in Dublin than ever they had been in London. Some such system was indeed inevitable in a country where Parliament was a sham and where the Viceroy was only an occasional visitor, who was never permitted to take himself or his office too seriously. The Primate, the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker generally acted as Lords Justices. Sometimes these were the real rulers, but generally they were “managed” by this or that influential family.

Originally, as Macartney explains in his “Account of Ireland,” the Viceroy did not think himself obliged to confine his choice to certain great officers merely because they were such, but considered other circumstances, amongst which were “integrity and disinterestedness, loyalty, zeal, and activity”; but by the time of George II. a series of ambitious and grasping men had got the control of affairs, and

## THE “UNDERTAKERS”

especially of the public revenues, entirely into their own hands, the Lord-Lieutenant being, with some exceptions, a mere puppet who “came over once in two years, stayed a few months, lived in kingly state, provided for his chaplain and secretary, received freedoms, gold boxes and complimentary addresses, and then hurried back to England with the utmost precipitation.” Whatever the circumstances, the bargain was always the same. The Undertakers or their deputies undertook to keep the country quiet, to secure a majority in Parliament for the necessary Bills and to see that the revenue was collected ; in return, they distributed among themselves and their families and followers all the patronage, the jobs, and the emoluments.

This system, needless to say, was utterly corrupt and inefficient, but so long as Ireland was fairly quiet no one was greatly concerned to interfere with it. In 1735 we find Swift writing to the Duke of Dorset on some matter of petty patronage for one of his friends, and stating as his recommendation “he is a very honest gentleman and, what is more important, a near relation of the Grattans, who in your Grace’s absence are Governors of all Ireland and your vicegerents when you are here, as I have often told you. They consist of an alderman, whom you are to find Lord Mayor at Michaelmas next ; of a doctor, who kills or cures half the city ; of two parsons, my subjects as prebendaries, who rule the other half, and of a vagrant brother who governs the north. These Grattans,” he adds, “will stickle to death for all their cousins to the five and fiftieth degree.”

The bulk of the people, “bound with three or four chains and with their claws pared to the quick,” were torpid and powerless, and during the first half

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

of the eighteenth century it was to Scotland rather than to Ireland that the fears of English statesmen were directed. Neither in 1715 nor in 1745 did Ireland move, and if any anxiety were felt it was regarding the attitude of the Scottish colony in the north, still suspected of Jacobite tendencies, rather than that of the native Irish. And in Ulster the settlers, disgusted with long-continued persecution and misgovernment, were clearing out in tens of thousands and sailing to America, where in time they helped to create fresh and more serious trouble for the Mother Country. The Ascendency party, therefore, had it all their own way, alike in the Irish Parliament and in the country, and they acted accordingly. Little wonder that Lord Chesterfield reported that the people of Ireland "were used worse than negroes by their lords and masters and their deputies of deputies of deputies," or that Townshend, in his turn, described them as "the most wretched people on earth." But the oligarchy and their representatives in the House, if they neglected the condition of the people, were indefatigable in maintaining their own rights and privileges. Once more we must fall back on Swift, who in well-known lines describes the Parliament as a "den of thieves" and a "harpies' nest," whose members ignore their real duties and are happiest when,

"All involved in wild disputes,  
Roaring till their lungs are spent,  
'Privilege of Parliament!'"

Such a system could not last for ever. Lord Morley in his "Historical Study" of Burke points out that a parliamentary oligarchy of the sort is in danger from two quarters: "the first vigorous-minded ruler who should come to the throne was sure to despise their incapacity and resent their

## LORD TOWNSHEND'S DIFFICULTY

patronage, the first breath of political life and agitation that should stir the people would instantly disclose the selfishness and incompetency of their protectors." The Irish Ascendancy were to suffer from both quarters. When George III. came to the throne the people from sheer despair and misery were ripe for revolt, and those in high places in London thoroughly despised the incapacity of the Undertakers. The faults of George III. have been perhaps sufficiently dwelt on, but, at any rate in his earlier days, he possessed vigour and courage and honesty, and he wanted "an end put to Irish jobs." And in Townshend he found an agent whose vigour and courage seemed equal to his own.

Lord Townshend, who had succeeded to the viscountcy on the death of his father in 1764, was not the first choice of the British Government. The new conditions of permanent residence and direct responsibility were not very attractive to the class of noblemen who had been accustomed to draw the salary and make a few months' appearance once in two years in the Irish capital. On the retirement in 1765 of Lord Northumberland, when the new system was definitely decided upon, Lord Weymouth was nominated; but on consideration he rightly concluded that he was not fit for the post, so he promptly resigned, although, as Junius is careful to point out, he did not neglect to draw upon the Treasury for the customary allowance of £3000 to meet the expenses of "equipage and voyage to Ireland," a voyage which he never undertook. Much the same thing happened in the cases of Lord Hertford and the Earl of Bristol, who followed in rapid succession, the only noteworthy event of the latter's brief and nominal vice-royalty being that the Earl managed to get rid of an importunate and

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

eccentric brother by nominating him Bishop of Cloyne. This wonderful personage, who succeeded to the earldom in 1780, having already in 1768 become Bishop of Derry, played a very prominent and indeed menacing part in some stirring events in Ireland not many years later.

When Townshend set out for Ireland for his memorable vice-royalty in the autumn of 1767 he was in his forty-third year and a capable and experienced soldier, but without political training, although at such a crisis political tact and experience were most of all called for. He had fought at Dettingen and Fontenoy and enjoyed the distinction of being the captor of Quebec, having succeeded to the command of the British forces on the death of Wolfe and the disablement of Monckton at the battle on the Heights of Abraham, four days previous. He was easy-going, somewhat vain and fond of personal display, and possessed a talent for what were then called "caricaturas," both with pen and pencil, which when exercised at the expense of some of the magnates with whom he came into conflict in Ireland involved him in no little unpopularity. When, for instance, he addressed Ireland as

" Ill-fated kingdom with a fertile soil,  
Whose factors mock the naked peasants' toil,"

it was not unnaturally resented as a personal reflection by those who had so long been responsible for the welfare and prosperity of the people.

The Irish Parliament had passed through more than one phase before it reached the peculiar situation in which Townshend found it. Henry II. originally contented himself with what was little more than a nominal overlordship in Ireland, the native chiefs (such of them as submitted) being left

## THE PARLIAMENT OF THE PALE

very much to their own devices as before. The King's deputy was a direct governor only of the Anglo-Norman Colony within the Pale, and this section of the community held parliaments which voted supplies and, incidentally, passed such laws as were proposed to them by the King's Council. The native Irish neither sent representatives to these early Parliaments nor, in practice, recognised their authority. Tribal wars were incessant after the English conquest as before it, and sometimes these assumed the dimensions of a general civil war, as in 1315, when the Ulster chiefs invited Edward Bruce to their assistance and crowned him King of Ireland at Carrickfergus. For two years after this Ireland was devastated from north to south, till famine brought the hostilities to an end for lack of matter to feed the flame. Bruce was finally defeated and killed at Dundalk, but not before Dublin itself had been in serious danger of falling into his hands and English power and prestige in Ireland had received a shock from which they were long in recovering.

A century and a half later the Wars of the Roses again imperilled English authority, the Anglo-Irish and their Parliament siding with the White Rose and ultimately acknowledging Perkin Warbeck as King of Ireland in rivalry to Henry VII. in England. This led to the passing of Poynings' Law, which for the time deprived the Irish Parliament of all legislative initiative and independence and put an effectual check on Yorkist separatist tendencies. Hitherto the Irish Parliament possessed (theoretically, at least) much the same powers as the English, the Lord Deputy or other Chief Governor taking the place of the King. The result was, as Sir George Macartney puts it, that the mode of procedure and

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

its results were “vague, partial and often injurious to both nations.” The Lord Deputy and his Parliament could, in effect, pass laws *rege inconsulto*, and thus entirely contrary rules of legal right and wrong might be in force in the two kingdoms. During the three centuries when English authority was nominal over the greater part of the island this did not perhaps matter very much, but with the accession of the House of Tudor and in view of the urgent danger brought to light by the Perkin Warbeck incident, a closer arrangement was imperative.

Henry sent over Sir Edward Poynings as Lord Deputy, and a Parliament was summoned at Drogheda in 1495 which enacted :

(1) That in future, before any Parliament could be summoned or held in Ireland, the Chief Governor and Council should certify to the King under the Great Seal of Ireland the considerations and causes thereof and the articles and the Acts proposed to be passed therein ;

(2) That after the King in his Council of England shall have considered, approved, or altered the said Acts or any of them and certified them back under the Great Seal of England and shall have given licence to summon and hold a Parliament, then the same shall be summoned and held and the said Acts so certified and no other shall be proposed, received, or rejected.

And another law provided by a wholesale clause that all English statutes then subsisting were to have force and effect in Ireland.

At the time it would appear that this change was looked on with approval in Ireland, for the risks and dangers involved in any quarrel between the Colony and the Mother Country were too great to be

## POYNINGS' LAW

ignored, and in those days, of course, "the King in Council in England" was by no means so dependent on his English Parliament, as came to be the situation in Stuart and still more in Georgian days. To this extent Poynings' Law was no more than a practical assertion of the royal authority, which no one dreamt of disputing. In "constitutional" times it became a very different matter, for then it grew more and more to mean the authority of the English Parliament over the Irish, and the conflict of two authorities claiming to be equal and habitually making use of phraseology that involved the idea of equality. Poynings' Law was modified by a statute in the reign of Philip and Mary, which gave permission to "certify" proposed laws to England during the sitting of a Parliament, although they had not been mentioned at the time of the summoning of the Parliament. But the essential principle remained—that all legislation in the Irish Parliament was subject to the veto of the English Privy Council.

In any case, however, the Irish Parliament did not amount to much at that period and for long after, and it is unnecessary to do more than glance at its proceedings and position under the Tudors and Stuarts. Under Elizabeth the country was devastated by war, and Parliament had little to say. James I. is remembered in that country chiefly by the Ulster Plantation, which raised perhaps as many difficulties as it settled. At this time, too, an important change was introduced. The old tribal divisions were to some extent broken up and the island "reduced into shire ground" on the English model; judicial circuits were established and the whole civil government remodelled on a plan as nearly as possible resembling that in force in

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

England. A House of Commons was now summoned, nominally representing for the first time the whole country, instead of the counties and boroughs of the Pale. Thus, says the chronicler, the whole people of Ireland were “equally received into the King’s protection”—a laudable idea, which unfortunately was not for a very long time carried into practical effect.

Wentworth, Charles I., Cromwell, James II., William III. and Anne all left their mark in different ways on Ireland and on the Irish Parliament; but so far as constitutional liberty and parliamentary development and progress are concerned the path was a downward one. It is, happily, no longer necessary to discuss the policy or the methods of the Penal Laws of Queen Anne’s reign with which the Irish statute book was so long disgraced. Sir George Macartney, whom we shall meet shortly as Lord Townshend’s chief secretary (the first Irishman who was appointed to that office), gives us in his “Account of Ireland” an interesting retrospect regarding the origin of those laws. The remarkable thing is that they did not originate in the reigns of Elizabeth or of James, when the two religions were fighting side by side and for their very lives, as it were, with the whole power of Spain and of France bent on the destruction of England and of the reformed religion. The enactment of the Penal Code was reserved for the comparatively peaceful times of Queen Anne, when Spain and France had been decisively defeated by land and by sea and when England and her liberties were secure and unchallenged. Macartney’s explanation is that the successive plantations of “new settlers, mostly of a newer religion,” who obtained large grants in Ireland during the latter half of the seventeenth

## THE DICTATES OF PERSECUTION

century, introduced new acrimony into the dispute. "From these adventurers," he says, "are descended some of the principal persons of the kingdom in opulence and power," and most of them were "men of an untoward republican spirit and of the sourest leven who eagerly adopted the most harsh and oppressive measures against those upon whose ruin they rose. The Restoration had secured to them their property and the Revolution armed them with power." Power and property, not religion, were, he suggests, the real motive of the persecution. "For this purpose they passed those acts which have now for these seventy years past been the established law of the land and which form the most complete code of persecution that ingenious bigotry ever compiled."

It is an easy thing for us in the twentieth century to renounce religious persecution and all that savours of it; we can thus "compound for sins we are inclined to by damning those we have no mind to." But in the eighteenth century it was different. These statutes were hotly defended by the successors in title of their inventors and by the Irish Parliament, which enacted them and which would not for many long years hear of their repeal or relaxation. Swift congratulated himself and his church on their efficiency and success, and Grattan, even when advocating Catholic emancipation, declared that he would sanction nothing that imperilled Protestant ascendancy. It is all the more satisfactory, therefore, to be able to cite the opinion of Sir George Macartney, writing at a time when the Penal Code was in full force and as the representative of an Ulster Protestant family. Sir George, when he wrote his "Account of Ireland," had been Chief Secretary to Lord Townshend, had been his principal

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

agent in breaking down the corrupt power of the Undertakers and had in consequence been involved with the Viceroy in the torrent of obloquy and misrepresentation with which that administration was overwhelmed. Yet which of his traducers would have had the courage or the statesmanship to write, as he did, regarding the policy towards the native Irish of that Parliament which, while ignoring the rights of others, was so determined on the maintenance of its own position and privileges ?

“ To the lot of Ireland,” he says, “ it has fallen to ingraft absurdity on the wisdom of England and tyranny on the religion that professes humanity. By her laws against Popery the bonds of society, the ties of nature and all the charities of kindred and friendship are torn to pieces ; those are allured who could not be compelled ; traps are laid for youth and inexperience, and it becomes a maxim of State to encourage the profligate and to reward the ungrateful. The concord of brothers is dissolved, the son is armed against the father and the husband and wife are taught to break through the most sacred and tender attachments when invited by interest, inconstancy, or libertinism. It is no longer the Protestant who is to be on his guard against the Papist, but the Papist must be armed at all points and watch day and night against the legal assaults of his wife, his children and his kindred. If all their affections are secure, yet his neighbour has an interest to become an informer against him ; his sword of defence may wound himself and the hospitality of his roof may leave him without a roof to shelter him, a bill of discovery may in a moment strip him of all his possessions.” And he concludes by declaring that “ the Irish laws against Papists are the harsh dictates of persecution, not the calm

## “WOOD’S HALFPENCE”

suggestion of reason and policy,” and that a “remission of many and an amendment of all of these laws are now become necessary.”

On the whole things political went smoothly enough during the reigns of the first and second Georges. In such an atmosphere it was easy for Swift to raise a storm about “Wood’s halfpence,” and a Parliament whose energies were exhausted in piling up penal laws and dividing the plunder of the State had no leisure to devise laws for preventing or relieving the perennial famines that swept the country, visitations (one or two of them, at least) which exceeded in their appalling effects even the great famine of 1846. “Wood’s halfpence” were perfectly good halfpence, as certified by Sir Isaac Newton, the Master of the Mint, and they were certainly a vast improvement on any small currency then in circulation ; but the circumstances under which the patent was granted gave the greatest satirist of the age the opportunity he wanted for attacking his opponents, and Dublin and the Dublin Parliament went wild with excitement over so lively and so irrelevant a skirmish. “An earthquake, a pestilence or a famine,” says an observer, “would not have occasioned a more general consternation than the terror of Wood’s halfpence,” and at the end of it all, needless to say, no one was a halfpenny the worse—or the better.

No one, in fact, took this Parliament very seriously. The Lord-Lieutenant was not even what he became in later and more laborious days, “the tenant of a gilded pillory.” He was simply a figure-head who signed papers and despatches and, if he valued his own comfort, did not inquire too closely into the accounts of the public revenue presented to him. The Lords Justices did what they

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

called “the King’s business” in Parliament, but, says Macartney, “it was in truth rather their own as it enabled them to establish their power and to domineer without control in the interior government of the country.” Taxation was not onerous and in ordinary times the hereditary revenue of the Crown in Ireland was sufficient to meet the expenditure and to leave a surplus. This was probably the origin of the practice which afterwards grew into so infamous a traffic of providing out of the Irish Revenue pensions for King’s favourites and others whose services could not be openly acknowledged or discussed in the English Parliament. The Irish Parliament was thus without the first privilege of any real assembly of the sort, the control of the purse, and many of the struggles between successive Viceroys and their Parliaments arose from the devices adopted to secure command of the Revenue.

In 1749, for example, there had been a balance of upwards of £220,000 in the Vice-Treasurer’s hands, and it was proposed to apply this to the paying off of part of the public debt. A long, rambling quarrel was carried on for years as to whether such sums could be appropriated without the King’s consent.

In 1751 the Viceroy, the Duke of Dorset, declared that his Majesty would “graciously consent” to the payment of debt out of the money remaining in the Treasury, and the Commons duly thanked the King for his recommendation but took no notice of his “gracious consent.” The English Privy Council inserted the missing words and duly returned the Bill, but in 1753 Parliament grew more bold and acknowledged neither the King’s recommendation nor his consent. Speaker Boyle was at this time the most influential man in Ireland,

## THE BEGINNINGS OF OPPOSITION

and in Anthony Malone, the Prime Serjeant, he had an able ally. The two made a stand and induced the House, by a narrow majority, to follow them. The result was that when the Bill came back from the Privy Council with the missing words inserted the Commons rejected it altogether. The Government in wrath at this slight dismissed Boyle from his employment of Chancellor of the Exchequer, and similar pains and penalties were meted out to those who had aided and abetted him in such an assertion of independence. This was really the beginning of an organised Opposition in the Irish House of Commons.

The practice of dismissing officials who displeased the Government became a habitual one, and we shall see many examples of it up till the time of the Union. It is generally represented as a tyrannical and persecuting course of procedure, but the position of the authorities, like everything else in the administration of Ireland, was a peculiar one. There was no properly organised Government or Ministry in the modern sense of the term. Every official fought for his own job through his patron, and as the clear bargain of the Undertakers was to support the Government policy and secure the passing of the necessary Bills the Viceroy and his Chief Secretary argued, not unnaturally from their point of view, that in organising successful opposition to the Government and placing it in a position of serious embarrassment these officials had betrayed their trust and broken their bargain. In a word, they were drawing public money for a specific purpose and when they ceased to do the work they were deprived of the job and of the salary pertaining to it. In the Ireland of the day, indeed, everything wants explaining. As "Single

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

Speech" Hamilton puts it in one of his letters : "As to the analogy between this and the British House of Commons every argument must be inconclusive which means to assimilate things which are in their very form and origin, in their very first concoction, not only different but opposite."

All this accounts for the real and fundamental evil of English Government in Ireland throughout the Eighteenth Century. And the evil unquestionably was the utter lack of continuity of policy. If the English Administration had had the courage and the foresight to abolish the corrupt and inefficient system that prevailed in Ireland and to place the two countries on an equal footing with common representation in the United Parliament it could easily have done so at any time during the earlier decades of the century. If on the other hand it thought the English Colony in Ireland worthy of having a separate Parliament of its own, and if it believed that such an arrangement was safe and workable it might have listened to Molyneux and Lucas and left that Parliament to its own devices, subject only to the dictates of Imperial unity and safety. There can be little doubt that the experiment would have broken down hopelessly as it did when attempted later on in Grattan's time, but at any rate it would have been a convincing and honest experiment. The English Government however, would do neither. It sent over one Viceroy who shut his eyes and let men and things in Ireland go as they pleased. And when he gave up the office in disgust, his successor would, as likely as not, be a man who insisted on Imperial control and carried on a series of irritating quarrels with the Undertakers and the Parliament, dismissed officials and, in general, asserted the Royal

## A HAPHAZARD POLICY

Authority. Then when things were in train for regular Government, and the Undertakers were defeated and scattered, the energetic Viceroy would be recalled and the reign of slackness and carelessness again prevailed until the Undertakers had recovered all the ground they had lost.

This is what happened in the case of the Duke of Dorset in 1750-56. For better or for worse he had challenged the influence of Speaker Boyle and had beaten him. The family faction lost all real power and influence, and if the Government had persevered the Colonial Parliament might have been permanently reduced to the position of a modern County Council subject to the regulations of the Local Government Board. But no sooner was the victory won than the energetic Viceroy disappeared and the Marquis of Hartington was sent over in his place. Everything was again in a state of uncertainty and Boyle by a little adroit management secured his reinstatement as Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was also created Earl of Shannon, and his injured feelings were further mollified by an extra pension of £2000 a year. Carter, one of his partisans, was made Secretary of State with an increased salary; another secured a large pension and the dismissed underlings were all duly provided for according to their station. Thus was the lesson once more taught that the way to win popularity in Ireland, high office, and fat pensions was not to support the English Government but to thwart it. It is this particular incident that Macartney calls the "fatal and ignominious peace," which made the task of all succeeding Governments infinitely harder and "swelled the charge of the establishment to an enormous size." Opposition, not support, was now seen to be the paying game, and the astute

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

Colonial politicians were not slow to take the hint.

The Dorset-Boyle incident had turned largely on finance and had shown the danger of allowing revenue to meet expenditure. Accordingly effective steps were taken to prevent, if possible, the contingency of another surplus such as would enable the King's Government to be carried on without frequent appeals to the Irish House of Commons. If the hereditary revenue were sufficient for the needs of the State, the market for eloquent and ingenious politicians necessarily fell, since there was no need to buy them or pension them every second year in order to secure the necessary votes. Money therefore was freely lavished on public works, the annual amount rising from £400 in each of the sessions before 1753 to a total of £400,000 in the succeeding ten years. Here again opinions may be divided. On the one hand Dublin was embellished with handsome and imposing public buildings, and grants were lavishly made for barracks, for the development of agriculture and industries, for collieries, canals, and so forth. All excellent work if honestly and judiciously done. But the charge was quite openly made, and there is evidence in support of it, that whilst some good was done the policy as a whole was used as a cloak for colossal misappropriation of the public revenue. The fact that the Committee of the House, that had charge of the allocation of these funds, came to be known as the "Scrambling Committee" is suggestive in this connection, and other evidence is not wanting.

Sir George Macartney—from whom we have already quoted so often, and whose papers are of great value for this period of Irish history—has no doubts on the point, and Macartney is a highly competent witness.

## AN IRISH CHIEF SECRETARY

Himself an Irish country gentleman, a member of the House, and a generous improver of his property, he was not, *prima facie*, likely to object to the use of public funds for the assistance of improving landlords. It is true that he was Chief Secretary for a time and therefore bound to be critical. But he was never merely an official. He was not so deeply involved in the distasteful task as to be identified with the system and he differed from most of his predecessors and successors by leaving office poorer than he entered it. He was in Dublin Castle and in the Irish Parliament long enough to see how things were done and why they were done, not long enough to join in the greedy game. Nor did he depend on Ireland for his official promotion. He had already achieved some distinction as Envoy Extraordinary to Russia, by carrying on somewhat delicate negotiations with the Empress Catherine, and he was destined to still greater distinction later on as Ambassador to China.\* It would be difficult to find a better qualified guide to the intricacies of Irish public life as he knew it.

“ As a redundancy in the Treasury had caused so much discussion and dispute,” says Macartney, “ it seemed now determined that the same cause of contest should never occur again. For this purpose the House of Commons in this session (1754) now began to appropriate a considerable part of the additional duties to their own use. This was done under pretence of encouraging public works such as inland navigations, collieries, and manufactories of different kinds : but the truth is that most of

\* A well-informed estimate of Macartney is to be found in “Our First Ambassador to China : an Account of the Life of George, Earl of Macartney, from hitherto unpublished Correspondence and Documents,” by Helen H. Robbins, 1908.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

these public works were private jobs, carried on under the direction and for the advantage of some considerable gentlemen in the House of Commons. By this means the parliamentary leaders perfectly answered all their views. They gratified their friends, impoverished the Treasury, and kept Government under a constant necessity of asking supplies. By repeated jobbing the purpose was effected : and, what is more unaccountable Government seemed to acquiesce in it without complaining. Since that time it has been the constant practice of the House of Commons to load the Money Bill with appropriations of this sort amounting sometimes to near a fourth of the whole supplies."

Sexton Pery, who had at first favoured the bounty system, declared afterwards in Parliament that the public money had been "lavished away in jobs," and Arthur Young sums it up by the statement that "a history of public works in Ireland would be a history of jobs." Money was voted he says "for collieries where there is no coal, for bridges where there are no rivers, navigable cuts where there is no water, harbours where there are no ships, and churches where there are no congregations."

The local authorities naturally did not fail to follow the example of the Dublin Parliament in the disposition of such funds as passed through their hands. When Lord Townshend had had several years' experience of Irish affairs, and when the pressure of distress led to violence and rioting that called for the utmost exertions of the Executive, we find him writing to one of the Secretaries of State \* : "The truth is that neither the laws nor provincial justice are administered here as

\* Letter in Record Office dated March 18, 1772.

## CAPTAIN ERSKINE'S REPORT

in England. Neither the Quarter Sessions nor Grand Juries give the county the same speedy relief or maintain the like respect as with us. The chief object of the Grand Juries is to dispose of the county cesses as best suits their party views and private convenience. The sums raised by these gentlemen throughout the kingdom do not amount to less than £130,000 per annum, which is levied upon the tenantry, the lower classes of which are in a state of poverty not to be described. It may be easily conceived what these poor people feel when these charges are added to rents already stretched to the utmost.

"It is notorious that some noblemen of the first rank have let their lands, in the parts where the linen manufacture flourishes most, at very high rates; others have granted long leases for great tracts of land to particular persons who have let them again at high rates and in such large parcels as does not suit the cultivation of the linen trade and must of course depopulate the country and sink the manufacture. . . . It must appear very extraordinary in England that the Protestants in Ireland should be so suddenly up in arms and that in the wealthiest and most flourishing parts of the kingdom. . . . [But] the patriots of their country appear much more alarmed at any expected increase of his Majesty's hereditary revenue than at the devastation of the most fertile part of this kingdom."

And amongst the papers forwarded by Lord Townshend to London, and to which he directed attention, is a private letter from Dungannon, from one J. F. Erskine, "a captain in Lord Drogheda's Light Dragoons," in which the grievances of the peasantry in the north are strongly empha-

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

sised, especially "a most exorbitant cess laid on each county by the Grand Jury for making of roads and bridges, which is advowedly turned into jobs for the advantage of private people. . . . It is well known that over most part of the country the lands are subset six deep so that those who actually labour it are squeezed to the very utmost. It is equally notorious that use is made by Grand Juries of the power given them to levy cess for making roads and bridges; jobs upon jobs, the one more infamous than another serve to support the influence of some leading men in the county. . . . Till such grievances are rectified riots must be frequent in this part of the world, and it is well worth Government's while to look into them."

In view of the large body of evidence of the misery, the increasing misery, of the people about this period it is curious to notice that another class of writers are never tired of reporting that "unparalleled progress" had been made by the country since 1740. Arthur Young, in a well-known passage, speaking of the period of his visit, says that, "since the year 1748 Ireland has made as great advances as could possibly be expected, perhaps greater than any country in Europe," and numerous other writers could be quoted to the same effect. It all depends on the point of view. War prices, the growing demands on agricultural industries for the supply of the Army and Navy, and the general expansion of the Empire and of trade undoubtedly conferred wealth on such classes as were in a position to take advantage of the circumstances. Thus Arthur Young tells of linen exports trebled, general exports doubled, and rents doubled and trebled. These things brought prosperity to Dublin, and to the great landlords, and

## THE CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE

the higher middlemen. But when lands were "subset six deep," as Captain Erskine tells us, none of this wealth reached the unfortunate cultivator, who on the contrary was "squeezed to the very utmost" to meet the increasing demands of the middleman, the tithe proctor, and the cess collector. Primate Stone saw this point and wrote in 1758 that the condition of the country was "not to be estimated by the efforts towards luxury and splendour of a few in the metropolis. The bulk of the people are not regularly either lodged, clothed, or fed. The estates have risen within these thirty years to more than double the value, but the condition of the occupiers of the land is not better than it was before the increase." And Lord Townshend as Viceroy saw further and deeper than Arthur Young, when after investigating matters for himself, he wrote in 1770 : "In short the distress of this people is very great. I hope to be excused for representing to his Majesty the miserable situation of the lower ranks of his subjects in this kingdom. What from the rapaciousness of unfeeling landlords and the restrictions of their trade, they are among the most wretched people on earth."

One other Viceroyalty, previous to that of Townshend that should be mentioned in passing owing to its influence on the history of Parliament is that of the Duke of Bedford, whose term of office extended from 1757 to 1761, marking the close of the Early Georgian period. The Duke was a weak man, and at the outset he allowed power to fall back still more into the hands of the Undertakers, who reaped a golden harvest for themselves and their friends. The speakership, hitherto practically an honorary office, and always held by a leading representative of the ruling combination—at that

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

time Ponsonby was the occupant of the chair—was made a highly lucrative one. In 1759 a modest £500 was granted to the Speaker “to maintain the state and dignity of his office,” a sum rapidly raised by successive increments to £4000 a year. And the hereditary revenue was now permanently crippled by a huge grant of £50,000 a year from that source as a bounty on the land carriage of all corn and flour from the country districts to Dublin. Nothing, of course, could be more praiseworthy than to promote tillage and milling, but there were not wanting critics to point out that the £50,000 was not long in finding its way into the pockets of the landowners and middlemen. At any rate the common people reaped no benefit if we may judge from the recurring complaints concerning their situation. In 1756 and 1757 the potatoes again failed, and, for the fourth time in half a century, famine swept the land. The Viceroy it is true procured a grant of £20,000 for the relief of distress, but Dublin appears to have secured the bulk of it, there being great lack of employment and three bank failures in one year.

At the end of his term the Duke had another trial of strength with the Undertakers on the old question of the certifying of money bills. The Primate, Lord Shannon, and Ponsonby joined in refusing to certify the necessary Bill, and Malone, Chancellor of the Exchequer, joined them in their opposition. To their consternation, however, the Earl of Kildare, generally a leader in such tactics, deserted to the Government and declared in favour of the Money Bill. The result was that the Bill was duly certified and went through by an enormous majority. Malone’s miscalculation cost him the Chancellorship, whilst Kildare was rewarded with a

## MONEY BILLS

Marquisate, and shortly after blossomed out into his full glory as Duke of Leinster.

The period closes with another curious incident. A great modern historian has declared that the writer is fortunate who can be sure that he has got half his facts right. In Irish history one is sometimes inclined to despair of the facts altogether. In 1759 there was what is called an anti-Union riot in Dublin. Mr. Lecky, that most painstaking and conscientious of investigators, attributes it to pure patriotism, and states that it was "perhaps the most furious ever known in the metropolis." The patriotic populace we are told "burst into the Parliament House, placed an old woman in the chair, searched for the journals which they desired to burn, stopped the carriages and killed the horses of the members, insulted the Chancellor, erected a gallows on which they intended to hang an obnoxious politician and compelled all who fell into their hands to swear that they would oppose the measure." Evidently the determined rising of a high-spirited people, solemnly resolved that no power on earth should lay profane hands on the palladium of Ireland's liberties. And the affair has ever since been cited as the classical instance of the attachment of the Irish people to their Parliament.

But Macartney, who was a contemporary and in a position to obtain all information at first hand, puts a somewhat different complexion on this desperate and high-principled patriotic insurrection. To his narrative of the period he appends the following note: "I cannot avoid mentioning a little incident that occurred in the Duke of Bedford's administration to show the spirit and humour of the times. An idle report was industriously propa-

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

gated that a Union with Great Britain was seriously intended and, of course, that the City of Dublin would be totally ruined. The mob phrase of the day was that the Parliament House was to be carried over to London. A vast concourse of disorderly persons of the lower sort, but abetted and encouraged by some gentlemen of note, assembled on this occasion in College Green. They threatened, insulted, and abused several members of both Houses and compelled many of them to take a solemn obligation never to consent to a Union. Amongst others they made the Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench submit to it; they forced him to administer an oath of this kind to the Attorney-General and then jocularly told the latter that he must allow himself to be *legally* sworn. At length, after many extravagances, they broke into the House of Commons, placed an old woman in the Speaker's chair and immediately entered into debate on the propriety of introducing pipes and tobacco. This ludicrous tumult lasted for some hours, and was at last only dispersed by the appearance of the military."

The Duke of Bedford's vice-royalty also marks the turning-point in the severity of the penal laws against Roman Catholics. In 1757 the Irish Parliament made an attempt to strengthen the law for the registration of priests ("a Registry Bill," says a Catholic writer, "which is calculated to extirpate our very remains"), but the Privy Council threw it out. It was in 1759, two years after this, that the Irish Courts ruled that "the laws did not presume a papist to exist in the kingdom, nor could they breathe without the connivance of the Government." The heart was gone out of the evil system, however, and the fears of a French invasion helped

## A "LUDICROUS TUMULT"

towards successive modifications of the severity of the code. At first these were tacitly permitted, afterwards they were brought in by direct legislation, the Sacramental Test Act so beloved by Swift not being repealed till 1779. Relief in one shape or another was granted in 1783, 1791, 1792, and 1793; but in the Duke of Bedford's time the Ascendency still carried matters with a high hand, and it is not surprising to learn that while the Protestant operatives of Dublin were indulging in their "ludicrous tumult" against the report of a Union, "the Catholics, on the other hand, received the rumour with indifference."

The Duke openly discouraged the bitterness of Parliament, advocated a relaxation of the penal laws and was publicly thanked from the altars in the Catholic chapels. Under his successor, Lord Halifax, in 1762 Lord Trimleston, on behalf of his co-religionists, offered military help to the Government in the war with France and Spain. "He assures me," wrote Halifax to England, "that all impressions in favour of the Stuart family are worn out with gentlemen of consequence and fortune in this country. The present war, he says, has occasioned such a strain on England as has suggested to his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects here that means may possibly now be struck whereby they may give proof of their loyalty." Halifax pointed out that legally this could not be done owing to the pressure of the penal code. Trimleston replied that there was no such law in Hanover and that the same point might be gained by the King taking Irish Roman Catholics into his service as Elector of Hanover. The Irish Brigade in France, he said, were so disgusted with that service that if a door was opened to them they would crowd into it.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

The young King received this assurance “with confidence and pleasure.” His Majesty, said Lord Egremont, was desirous to give his Irish subjects “an opportunity of exerting their loyalty. His Majesty,” he added, “is about to send help to Portugal. It might be possible to induce a certain number of Catholics of Ireland to engage for a limited period in the Portuguese service. His Majesty would count it an effectual assistance and an agreeable mark of zeal.”

Lord Trimleston and Lord Kenmare at once set to work. Steps were taken for the raising, equipment, and drilling of seven regiments, and recruits poured in rapidly. They were to remain British subjects under the protection of the Crown and were to be returned to Ireland at the conclusion of their term of service. And then the Irish Parliament came in with what Halifax bluntly called “its ill-bred bigotry” and vetoed the whole project. Men who “were not presumed to exist” could not be permitted to serve the King !

## CHAPTER II

### LORD TOWNSHEND AND HIS DIFFICULTIES

LORD TOWNSHEND, as we have seen, came to Ireland in 1767, after George III. had made three successive failures in his endeavours to secure an energetic resident viceroy. It was obvious that things could not go on much longer as they were. The Undertakers, with their insatiable greed, had usurped the Government of the country and made fair and honest government impossible in Ireland. It is not clear whether Townshend realised what was in store for him when he accepted the office. Many years before, Wentworth, on becoming Viceroy, had discovered in power in Dublin “a company of men the most intent upon their own hands that ever I met with, and so as these speed they consider other things at a very great distance”; and Townshend soon discovered that the nature of the Oligarchy had not changed. The work to be done by Parliament was, as usual, very small. The war called for more men, and Ireland was to be asked for an augmentation of her military establishment from 12,000 to 15,000 men—not a large demand in view of the emergencies; the tenure of office of the judges was to be put on something like a constitutional basis; and the scandal of a Parliament sitting throughout a whole reign, as had happened in the case of George II.’s Irish Parliament, was to be put an end to by a limiting Bill.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

There was no objection in principle to any of these measures, and at the outset some progress was made. The Undertakers had had warning from England that a new system was to be inaugurated, and they thought it best to feel their way. The Viceroy, however, soon discovered that if there was to be progress it would have to be bought and paid for. Lord Shannon, Ponsonby, the Speaker, and Hely Hutchinson, the Prime Serjeant, were the magnates in power, and they put their demands with perfect frankness to the Viceroy. They asked for offices, pensions, and honours proportioned to the number of their friends and their weight in the country. As a beginning Shannon applied for the post of Lord Justice ; the Speaker demanded that the indirectly lucrative position of Examinator of Customs should be given to his two sons for their joint lives ; whilst the Prime Serjeant would be content for the present with £4000, life offices of £500 a year for his two sons—youths of ten and eleven respectively—and a promise that his wife should be created a viscountess. It was further pointed out that the Augmentation Bill would be a difficult one to get through, and that the co-operation of the Duke of Leinster, Lord Tyrone, Sir William Osborne, and Henry Flood—then the rising hope of the “patriots,” as a noisy group in the Commons had labelled themselves—would have to be secured.

Townshend concealed his feelings. He reported the situation to Shelburne, who was no doubt familiar with it already, and who, in accordance with the new system now to be inaugurated, replied, “We cannot recommend the King to grant places and pensions for life or years.” “The leading persons in Ireland,” he concluded stiffly, “must

## PLACES AND PENSIONS

act as they can answer to their consciences and as representatives of their country." "I knew," was Townshend's reply, "that his Majesty did not mean to grant more pensions; nor could I give them hopes, though I could not help listening to their proposals. But when I observed how very weak this Government (the Irish Executive) had become, I thought it my duty to submit the matter again to his Majesty, being convinced that until the system of government here can be totally changed and the true weight and interest of the Crown brought back to its former character, there must be some relaxation of this rule. I am afraid strict adherence to this rule will be a great prejudice to his Majesty's service." The "leading persons" were polite but inflexible. "No bribes, no Bills" was their motto, and when they saw that nothing could be gained by talk they went into determined opposition. Townshend hoped that sufficient "independent gentlemen of moderation" might be found to carry the Bill in spite of the Undertakers, but the hope was a vain one. "What shall I do?" he writes to Shelburne. "Shall I apply to those who are generally in opposition and are called the independent gentry of this country? Shall I prorogue? I doubt whether any other course will prevent things from being carried to lengths that we shall not hereafter be able to remedy."

The Septennial Bill was on a slightly different footing, for it was extremely popular; and the members of the House, although they disliked it as adding to their expenses and risks, dared not openly oppose it. So it passed all its stages in Ireland, and came back from the English Privy Council altered only from a Septennial Bill to an Octennial

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

Bill, on the not very convincing ground that otherwise general elections might occur simultaneously in the two countries. The Judges Bill fell through, but the Octennial Act was regarded as a triumph. All Ireland accepted it with enthusiasm. Townshend became popular with everybody but the Undertakers, and great things were hoped from the new system. The Viceroy proposed to take advantage of this popularity to dissolve, and try to carry the Augmentation Bill in a new House of Commons.

England at this time was badly in lack of a great man at the head of affairs, and Shelburne, gifted as he was with many excellent qualities, certainly was not one. Chatham was in seclusion, and Charles Townshend, the Viceroy's brilliant brother, to whom he owed his appointment and to whom he had looked for support and guidance, was dead. Shelburne forced Townshend forward on the wrong line. It was an English Act that restricted the troops on the Irish Establishment to 12,000 men, and now he secured another English Act abolishing the restriction but giving a guarantee—which was never kept—that a minimum of 12,000 men of the increased army should be permanently retained in Ireland. A King's message was then sent over to Ireland announcing what had been done, declaring that the augmentation to 15,000 men was necessary, and that of these 12,000 would be retained in Ireland “as far as is consistent with such a defence as the safety of both kingdoms in case of any sudden or extraordinary emergency may require.”

The result was inevitable. Whether or not the English Parliament had the technical right to pass Irish Acts independently of the Irish Parliament,

## THE OCTENNIAL ACT

there could be no doubt that such an Act under such circumstances was a deliberate provocation. Shannon, Ponsonby, Hely Hutchinson, and the rest felt for the first time on firm ground. They had warned Townshend that Flood must be "conciliated," and it was to Flood's hands that a motion rejecting the Address in reply to the King's message was entrusted. The motion was carried in a full and excited House by a small but sufficient majority. But Townshend's blood was up. He wrote full of confidence to his chief: "You must now be convinced on what grounds many of the leading interests in this kingdom have hitherto undertaken to carry on his Majesty's affairs, and why when difficulties have arisen, or have been artificially created, Government has generally been defeated by its own strength." He demanded an immediate dissolution, created four new peers, three baronets, and four Privy Councillors, just to show that the Viceroy had the resources of civilisation at his disposal as well as the Undertakers, and prepared for the elections. "This is now the crisis of Irish Government," he writes to Shelburne. "If a system is at this time wisely formed and steadily pursued, his Majesty's affairs may hereafter be carried on with ease, dignity, and safety; but if only a few changes are made here and there, and this particular man is to be raised and another depressed, probably to be restored again in a few months, as in 1755,\* with double powers and weight, it will only add fuel to the fire, and at last bring the King's authority, low as it now is, into still greater contempt." If the authority of the Crown was to be maintained, he argued in another letter, the power of "the

\* See p. 29.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

aristocratic party in Ireland " must be thoroughly broken. " The constant plan of these men of power," he said, " is to possess the Government of this country and to lower the authority of the English Government." They had almost reduced the Viceroyalty to a " mere pageant of State." " The Octennial Bill," he goes on to say, " gave the first blow to the dominion of aristocracy in this kingdom and it rests with Government to second the good effects of it."

Townshend's real struggle was to begin with the new Parliament which would meet in October 1769. In advance he had been provided with another Chief Secretary, Lord Frederick Campbell, probably not relishing the outlook, having arranged to retire. He now knew the nature of his task, and his letters to Macartney—the new Chief Secretary—leave nothing to be desired in the way of clearness. He had, he informed him in February, " no communication with those powerful men who claimed to rule the kingdom, and indeed the distance at which they hold themselves and the neglect of the common civilities to my station would deprive me of any intercourse except where his Majesty's immediate service required it." The Revenue Board would be the real difficulty, for that was " the source from whence all the difficulties to the measures and the Crown, the distress of successive Chief Governors, and the dominion of party in this kingdom hath flowed." By their control of the Board the Undertakers exercised a weight of patronage superior to that of the Lord Lieutenant, for they had the power of increasing salaries and of " doling out £116,000 every two years, chiefly in jobs." They boasted that they would open the new session with a majority of nearly sixty against

## THE "MEN OF POWER"

the Government, and, although themselves paid servants of the Crown, they would "ransack even the sick-beds of their dependants" to defeat the measures of the Government.

Macartney came over in April with full instructions and a long and most important despatch, which is to be found among the unpublished Macartney papers, was the result. It is endorsed "most secret," and is addressed by Lord Townshend to Lord Weymouth, who had succeeded Shelburne as Secretary of State, the date being April 26, 1769. Gratitude does not prevail in politics, and the Viceroy had to report that in spite of his two rapid steps in the peerage the Duke of Leinster could not be looked to for any support. "On the contrary, he told me frankly that he had lately seen Lord Shannon and Mr. Ponsonby, and that he had entered into an agreement of reciprocal communication with them upon points of business for the ensuing session." He had criticised certain appointments made or suggested, and the Viceroy had retorted that his Grace must not be surprised if the King thought he had "an equal right in this kingdom as elsewhere to expect that those who with their families enjoyed his most distinguished favours should support his measures." The Duke rather weakly replied that he had "always entertained a great regard for Lord Shannon"; but he could not be got to say anything definite about the coming session except that he disapproved of the augmentation. "What was more observable," adds the Viceroy, "was that I could obtain no declaration from his Grace upon the exorbitant grants made every session for private purposes, part of which I have often before heard him condemn, as a great part

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

of these sums are notoriously squandered in useless jobs ; and in truth they may be called so many Parliamentary pensions, granted through Mr. Ponsonby's influence to gratify his followers and fix them to his interest." And then comes a curious and somewhat unexpected flash of light on this part of the situation. "Upon the whole I believe," says Lord Townshend, who was no picker-up of the first tale told him, "that the Duke of Leinster's great object is to be Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and that his Grace will take that part which shall appear to him to lead most effectively to it ; and from the success that opposition has met with in this country for a long course of years it is no wonder his Grace should think it the shortest and the surest road." There have been many speculations as to the motives and aims of this vain and weak politician and his family. Perhaps Lord Townshend was not very wide of the mark.

From the proud descendant of the Geraldines the Viceroy turned to Mr. Ponsonby, and in an interview, at which he took care to secure the presence of Macartney as witness, he certainly dealt faithfully with the politician who ruled the House of Commons and combined in his own person the offices of Speaker, Examinator of Customs, and head of the Revenue Board, to name only the most prominent. Townshend reminded him of the events of the last session, which he said had been mortifying and "particularly painful to me," yet, at his Majesty's request and in view of Ponsonby's "high rank in the State and of the power which the Crown had placed in his hands," he would with pleasure convey any assurances of support from him which would ensure his Majesty's

## THE VICEROY INSISTS

measures in a future day. Ponsonby replied with the strongest expressions of his attachment to his Majesty, and modestly disclaimed the influence attributed to him. But Townshend was long past the stage of such polite evasions, and simply replied that the matter was beyond dispute, adding that "from the favour of the Crown he derived a following far superior to that which I possessed as Chief Governor, and that for this reason I must insist upon knowing whether he would undertake to carry through the business of the session—which was no more than was generally expected from the officers in England—and to bring the same friends for Government which he had brought against it."

This was a clear warning of dismissal from official posts in case of continued obstruction, but Ponsonby replied that "there was a wide difference between the servants of the Crown in this country and in England"—which was certainly true—and "with all duty and submission, he declined to give any engagement."

Lord Shannon had gone out of town on hearing of Macartney's arrival, and Townshend did not feel inclined to send two hundred miles for him in order to learn his intentions. "Mr. Ponsonby," he says, "may fluctuate and oppose, but it is well known that Lord Shannon animates and disciplines the whole against Government, and any condescension to him would, in my opinion, have been productive of no advantage to his Majesty's Government." There only remained the Prime Serjeant and the Attorney-General. The former, Hely Hutchinson, showed said the Viceroy, inclinations (afterwards abundantly confirmed) "to return to the King's service"—once he was sure

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

that Townshend was in earnest and was likely to win. Tisdall, the Attorney-General, showed the same disposition ; and he was worth securing, since “the perfect knowledge which he has of the House of Commons, his long habitude with men and management in business would at all times be most useful to Government.” Still, Townshend had his doubts of Tisdall. “His disappointment of the Great Seal has taken too deep root in his mind, and the utmost I can hope from him is that he will remain neutral at best upon any question which may arise beyond the ordinary course of business.”

Townshend, in fact, had already grown cynical, although, as events proved, he had effectually detached Hely Hutchinson and Tisdall from the “aristocratic faction.” “The King’s most favoured servants,” he writes, “have been so long accustomed to defeat his Majesty’s measures by the power of the Crown that those who have been gratified with offices for life are thereby enabled to boast of their independence and to defeat Government, and that mankind here have so long found the sweets of a change of governors by selling under one what they obtained of a former, and extorting something more under a third,” that the King’s authority was reduced to a shadow. What especially exasperated him was that the Undertakers gorged with Crown preferment and pay, were able “to defeat his Majesty’s measures by the power of the Crown.” He frequently recurs to this point in these letters. “There is,” he says, writing from Youghal,\* where he had been again pressing Ponsonby in view of the opening of

\* “Macartney Papers,” Townshend to Weymouth (most secret and separate), September 13, 1769.

## THE BOARD OF REVENUE

Parliament, "nothing either popular or formidable in these persons or their party. It is the power they derive from the Crown and exercise so fully and largely over this kingdom which subjects the minds of people to them. . . . It rests with Government to re-establish its own authority by disarming those who have turned their arms against it."

And to this end the all-important thing was for the Government to resume its control of the Board of Revenue, now in Ponsonby's hands. The Crown and not the Undertakers would then be in a position to promote its followers to such positions of emolument as they coveted, and would so be enabled "to provide for Members of Parliament and their relations as before mentioned, and thereby secure their gratitude and attachment to the Government instead of to the Revenue Board." Coming to particulars, the Viceroy mentions that the Revenue Board consists of Mr. Ponsonby, Mr. Bourke, Lord Dungannon, Lord Lanesborough, Mr. Bellingham Boyle, Mr. Jones, and Mr. Milbanke. Ponsonby and Lanesborough were marked out for punishment, the former being virtually leader of the Opposition in the House and the latter as the "owner" of four members, "all of whom he had brought against the Government during the last session." Bourke was old and infirm and looking for a pension: Dungannon wanted an earldom: Boyle was a cipher, and the other two resided in England, their posts, worth £1000 a year each, being apparently simply English pensions on the Irish revenue.

As for the new men to be brought forward, Townshend remembered Ponsonby's own hint when the Undertakers made their original demands, and

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

proposed that Sir William Osborne and Flood, “men of great talents in public business and Parliamentary debate,” should be appointed to the Board, together with Mr. Beresford, “My Lord Tyrone’s brother” and Mr. Loftus, “who commands seven members and is heir to one of the estates in this Kingdom.” Loftus, it may be here mentioned, was duly “gratified,” got his place on the Revenue and a Privy Councillorship. He was created Earl of Ely, and it is noted, by way of exception, in a subsequent patronage list, that he “has been very faithful and constant in his support ever since he made his bargain with Lord Townshend.” Then follows a dreary list of smaller men who could be secured for “small pensions.” Lord Drogheda was to succeed Lord Shannon at the Ordnance, Lord Annaly would be gratified with the conferment of Ponsonby’s place of Examiner of Customs for his brother, whilst Mr. Conolly’s brother-in-law “may have a seat at the Barrack Board”—the building (or non-building) of barracks in all possible and impossible places being, at the time, a favourite means of misappropriating public funds. Mr. Malone was to be Chancellor of the Exchequer, whilst the great twin brethren, the Prime Serjeant and the Attorney-General, were to be kept under observation, to see “whether they will amend their conduct.”

Here we have “Satan’s invisible world displayed,” the whole system of “influence” discussed in detail and in black and white. The thing had gone on, as we know, in Swift’s day and long before it, and although satirists like the Dean attacked the “den of thieves” and longed for the time when the devil himself would “quite destroy the harpies’ nest,” still, this wonderful Parliament had gone on for

## THE “DEN OF THIEVES”

so long, and so many eminently respectable families were interested in its thefts and embezzlements that perhaps, in spite of all the talk, no one was really very much shocked. What was changed in the Irish Parliament in Townshend's time was that instead of having many competing paymasters the members were in future, if Townshend had his way, and since no one expected them to act honestly, to look to one paymaster—the Crown. Some moralists appear to have convinced themselves that this made a vast difference and that what was natural and harmless enough when practised as a “domestic” industry became black corruption and wickedness when practised by Lord Townshend and his successors. It is a nice point in the ethics of comparative dishonesty upon which we do not presume to decide, but it may be pointed out that no such plea in mitigation was accepted at the time by the critics of the earlier Parliaments. It was invented by apologists of later origin.

Walpole is, of course, the classic example upon whom one falls back in considering such a state of affairs, and it is not likely that Macaulay's well-known apology for Walpole can be improved upon: “Walpole governed by corruption because in his time it was impossible to govern otherwise. Corruption was unnecessary for the Tudors, for their Parliaments were feeble. But during the century that followed the Restoration the House of Commons was in that situation in which assemblies must be managed by corruption or cannot be managed at all. . . . A large proportion of the members had absolutely no motive to support any administration except their own interest in the lowest sense of the word.” Bolingbroke, Macaulay goes on to tell us, suggested a remedy resembling that after-

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

wards attempted in Ireland by Townshend. “Bolingbroke, who was the ablest and the most vehement of those who raised the clamour against corruption, had no better remedy to propose than that the Royal prerogative should be strengthened. The remedy would no doubt have been efficient. The only question is whether it would not have been worse than the disease. The fault was in the constitution of the Legislature, and to blame those Ministers who managed the Legislature in the only way in which it could be managed is gross injustice. They submitted to extortion because they could not help themselves. We might as well accuse the poor Lowland farmers who paid blackmail to Rob Roy of corrupting the virtue of the Highlanders as accuse Sir Robert Walpole of corrupting the virtue of Parliament.” And if this plea is to hold good the benefit of it must in all fairness be conceded to successive Irish Viceroys, from Townshend to Cornwallis, as well as to the English Prime Minister, who, himself unpurchasable, could say from bitter experience on surveying the flying squadron, “All these men have their price.”

And, after all, is it quite safe for more modern politicians to indulge in too much moral indignation over the failings of those who came before them? Even since 1769 or 1799 those who have helped to make majorities in the country or in Parliament have sometimes expected “gratifications.” In Macaulay’s eyes, no doubt, the great Whig majority that supported Grey in the first Reform Parliament represented the high-water mark of political rectitude, and yet Thomas Creevy,\* who knew so many things, in speaking of the break-up of that majority, is able to say: “Lord Grey told me yesterday

\* “The Creevy Papers,” ii. p. 294.

## THE HEREDITARY REVENUE

that the applications made to him for peerages had been over four hundred, and for baronetcies absolutely endless." And it is well to remember that there is still such an official as the patronage secretary and that sometimes the close of a session or of a Parliament is not remotely connected with a list of honours.

The Viceroy wound up this portentous despatch with the warning, always given and always neglected, that half-measures would be of no use. Townshend, with whom in this volume we begin, and Cornwallis, with whom we end, tell the same tale : If English policy in Ireland were not carried through on some continuous plan things might as well be left alone and the Viceroy recalled. "Your Lordship," Townshend assures Weymouth, "will always be pleased to have in mind that if you do not steadily persevere in this plan you must recur to the old system of Lords Justices, which is no other than this, that if you will not quietly submit to their governing this country as they please, they will endeavour to compel you to it. On the contrary if the ideas which I have submitted be approved, and it shall be determined to carry it steadily into execution, you may emancipate this kingdom from the usurpation of a party and restore it to its natural Government."

One result of placing capable and honest men on the Revenue Board would be a great increase in the revenue at present neglected and embezzled in various ways. "I have the satisfaction of being able to acquaint your Lordship that from the best inquiries which I have made I have reason to think that his Majesty's hereditary revenue may be considerably increased by good management and by proper regulations and laws, without imposing any

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

new taxes upon the people. I am particularly assured that in the Province of Munster only it may be improved from £20,000 to £50,000 per annum. Sir Richard Cox, who was the ablest Commissioner that ever sat at the Revenue Board, declared that the revenue may and ought to be raised to £800,000 per annum, clear of all charges of management." When it is mentioned that in the balance-sheet for this very year, 1769, which is among Sir George Macartney's papers, the hereditary revenue is given as £661,191, with a deduction of £186,755 for management expenses, leaving a net revenue of £474,436, it will be seen how great was the leakage and what an improvement in the revenue would have resulted if Lord Townshend's financial reforms had been thoroughly carried into effect.

In truth, there were leakages everywhere, for why should ill-paid subordinates in remote districts be more scrupulous than their chiefs in the metropolis ? "The King's quit rents," the report goes on, "are falling every day for want of regular surveys and vigorous prosecution of defaulters. The inland duties on spirits are likewise deficient at least one-third. Neither is the hearth money collected by one-third ; whilst the landlord, who is a man of power, is favoured, it is wrung from the poor cottagers, and there is besides at least £100,000 raised upon them annually by provincial assessments for the repair of roads which they hardly ever travel, whilst the turnpike roads are generally turned to private jobs. The lower order of men are oppressed beyond measure, and the higher well able to provide for the defence of the country. I thought it my duty," says Townshend, in conclusion, "to mention these matters, that the Crown may know where

## THE "BLACK LIST"

the real poverty of the country lies which is so much complained of, and where its abilities lie in case the exigencies of his Majesty's services shall require fresh resources."\*

So Townshend opened the campaign against the Undertakers which was carried on with varying fortunes till his departure in 1772. Things in London did not go so smoothly as he had hoped. Weymouth proved a backboneless Minister, even less satisfactory to deal with than Shelburne. Time was passing, and with the opening of the new Irish Parliament due in October it was imperative for the Viceroy to know where he stood and to what extent he could depend on Government approval and support in the policy which he had indicated so clearly in his despatch of April 21. Macartney was sent over, but proceeded north to Scotland.† Letter followed letter without bringing the necessary assurances from London. No help was to be looked for in Dublin Castle, and Townshend's spirits fell. "From the King's birthday to this hour," writes the Viceroy, in June, "I have known nothing but rain and rheumatism and the next day rheumatism and rain again." Meanwhile he was busy, with what assistance he

\* Townshend to Weymouth, April 21, 1769. "Macartney Papers."

† One very characteristic soldier's letter followed him from the Castle in the same month. "When you have cast your eye over Mr. Ponsonby's letter and mine," writes Townshend, "pray seal and forward the latter. I believe you think it extremely civil and such as it ought to be on this occasion especially. I remember a Grenadier once observed in the line, as Prince Ferdinand was going along and nodding to the soldiery, how extraordinarily civil the Prince was. 'Yes,' observed the other, 'I observed it too, and be damned to him! You'll find he is always so before we are to be damnably peppered.'" It was his fondness for anecdotes and proverbs that secured Townshend his nickname of Sancho Panza from the wits of the Opposition.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

could muster, in the preparation of an alphabetical list of Members of the House of Commons with appropriate notes, and was untiring also in that other duty of eighteenth-century Viceroys, the attempt to drink himself into popularity with a notoriously hard-drinking society. He seems to have overdone the part, and there is a curious letter, also in June, from Waite, the Under-Secretary, asking Macartney to come over, as he was badly wanted, for the Viceroy "cannot go alone." "Management will be necessary : the principal difficulties which you will have to combat against will arise from his own irregularities." "Mr. Jackson" (another official) "is a most worthy and religious man, but he is very timorous in his disposition and wants the courage that is necessary in a Minister." In July Waite is in a panic again, and writes to Macartney : "Your presence here is of infinite consequence, and therefore for heaven's sake come over as soon as you can. I am very confident that your abilities and dexterity will work out our salvation ; that Mr. Jackson may bottle up his terrors and make a present of them to Mr. Conway."

The "terrors" on this occasion arose from a fear of the incautious disclosure of the Black List, as the alphabetical list of the House already referred to is more familiarly called. Mr. Hunt, in his edition\* of a copy of this instructive document as it existed some years later in Harcourt's time, comes to the conclusion that the original manuscript was compiled in 1775 by Sir John Blaquiere, who was Chief Secretary in that year. But this is obviously incorrect, as there is unmistakable reference to it in the correspondence of 1769, before

\* "The Irish Parliament, 1775." Edited by William Hunt.

## MONEY BILL REJECTED

Blaquiere had set foot in Ireland. Already in June\* while pressing the Government for more definite support, Townshend explains that "an alphabetical list of the House of Commons has been made out by my order and under my inspection, in which the new ones are particularly marked and the whole described in such a method as to show how they are disposed and by whom influenced, and containing an observation upon each individual. This work was in hand but not perfected while Sir George Macartney was in Ireland, and with all the assiduity that could be given to it, it was not in my power to send it over to him until the week before last. To this list I beg leave to refer your Lordship and his Majesty's servants for information upon the head of members. Sir George Macartney has my orders to attend your Lordship with it whenever you shall think proper."

It was the sending of this highly confidential and compromising list to London that threw the "worthy and religious" Jackson, "who sees every object of terror through a multiplying as well as a magnifying glass," into such a panic. People in London would "draw conclusions." If Ministers had made it public, or if it had been "left open to the view of low people" it might become "a very serious affair" thinks Mr. Waite.

Meantime, however, Townshend was no nearer the desired certainty as to his position. He was deeply interested in the condition of the country and its industries, and proposed making a tour of Munster in August. He would meet various politicians in their country houses, and he wanted to know whether, having broken with the "great

\* Townshend to Weymouth, June 24, 1769. "Macartney Papers."

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

Powers," he could definitely promise such rewards to "men of fidelity and zeal" as would detach them from the Speaker and his friends. In August he presses for an immediate reply, announces the conversion of the Attorney-General, and suggests the establishment of "an Order of the nature of the Thistle or the Bath"—a project which ultimately took shape in the Order of St. Patrick, established during the viceroyalty of Lord Temple in 1782. But he had to return to Dublin and face the opening of the critical session with nothing settled. Ponsonby, who no doubt had inside sources of information and knew of the Viceroy's difficulties, did not delay in letting him have the expected "peppering." Townshend was helpless and could promise nothing. Ponsonby held the field and was unanimously re-elected Speaker. The usual Money Bill was brought in, certified under the Great Seal of England, and it was rejected on second reading by 94 to 76, the resolution taking the form "that this Bill is rejected because it did not take its rise in this House," a proceeding, says the Viceroy in reporting the matter to England, "not paralleled in this Kingdom since 1496, except in the case of Lord Sydney in 1692." And again he asked for powers and assurances.

But in Ireland he displayed no outward sign of resentment, and the Undertakers seem to have thought they had won the battle and that their persecutor would accept the situation, as so many previous Viceroys had done. If Ponsonby and his friends kept the control of the purse and of the Revenue Board, nothing else really mattered. So the House proceeded to pass the Estimates for two years, as usual, assented to the Augmentation Scheme and voted a credit of £100,000 to the

## THE VICEROY'S VICTORY

Government. But Townshend was quietly moving up his battalions. As he had expected and hoped, the direct repudiation of Poynings' Law had at last alarmed the sluggish Ministers in London, and he had been assured of the necessary support. A careful examination of the Treasury Accounts showed that although with an income from the hereditary revenue of £474,436 and an expenditure of £508,950 there was an apparent deficit of £34,514, yet there were some groups of items (including pensions, £63,000, and amounting in all to £226,660) which by the easy financial methods of those days might for some short time be postponed. Government could, if necessary, be carried on for a while without Parliament. And so on December 26 the Viceroy arrived at the House of Lords in state, sent for the Commons, gave the Royal assent to such Bills as were ready, read a formal protest against the rejection of the first Money Bill as an infringement of Poynings' Law, ordered his protest to be entered in full in the Journals of both Houses, and prorogued Parliament.

And then the blows fell hard and fast on the embarrassed heads of the "aristocratic faction." The correspondence now reads like a bulletin from a hard-fought field. Lord Shannon, Lord Lanesborough, Lord Lowth, Ponsonby, Mayne, Rowley and Fownes were dismissed from the Privy Council; the Revenue Board (the real crux of the situation), consisting, as already mentioned, of Ponsonby, Lord Dungannon, John Burke, Lord Lanesborough, Boyle, Jones and Milbanke, was dissolved, and a new Board consisting of Sir William Osborne and John Beresford, with Dungannon, Burke and Boyle, appointed. The lordly Shannon, "Master General as well of his Majesty's Ordnance as of his Majesty's

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

Arms, Armouries and other Habiliments of War in this Kingdom," was discharged with as little ceremony as one of his own footmen, and Lord Drogheda appointed. A horde of the smaller hangers-on (such of them as did not hasten to make their peace with the new Powers) went down with even less ceremony. Five new peerages were created ; Hely Hutchinson and Tisdall were admitted to favour ; Paterson, the Solicitor-General, was made Chief Justice of the Common Pleas (a post hitherto reserved for Englishmen) ; Loftus was put under strict observation for good behaviour.

Townshend had won all along the line. The waverers, as he had predicted, promptly rallied to the side of real authority, and when Parliament met again another Speaker sat in Ponsonby's seat and confidence in the Viceroy was enthusiastically voted by 132 to 107. John Fitzgibbon, afterwards Lord Chancellor and Earl of Clare, who was himself by way of being a patriot at this time and whose indiscretions are always interesting, told the House afterwards that the victory cost the Government £500,000. That is how parliamentary victories were won in those days.

One serio-comic interlude deserves separate mention. The Duke of Leinster, who, as we have seen, scorned to enter the arena on his own account, kept a favourite, Sir William Mayne, who had a family borough and who served to fetch and carry between College Green and Leinster House. He had a seat on the Privy Council, from which, as we have seen, the Viceroy dismissed him. He had applied for the post of Chief Secretary before Macartney came, and Townshend, whose pen sometimes ran away with him, declined the services of "one of the most florid, perpetual, and inept orators that

## A DUKE IN A TEMPER

ever performed on the Irish or on any other stage.” Mayne next claimed a peerage, and with equal lack of success ; so he went into opposition, as good patriots did when no one hired them. In Blaquiere’s alphabetical list already referred to he is catalogued as a gentleman who became “ a great patriot in order to effect a job in a lease of lands from the City of Dublin, in which he succeeded. He is,” it is added, “ a violent but bad speaker, perpetually calling for accounts and estimates without knowing their use.”

But the Duke looked on this particular piece of discipline as a personal affront. If the name of his friend, Sir William, were removed from the list of the Privy Council, he wrote, he would ask that his own should be erased at the same time. “ It is the only favour I ever asked of your Excellency,” says the angry Duke, “ and I flatter myself that your Excellency will take such steps as are proper to have my request complied with.” The Duke had burnt his boats : he would never be Viceroy. He and his whole family went into violent opposition, one of them, the famous Lord Edward, dying miserably as the victim of an abortive insurrection. And all for the sake of that “ bad speaker,” “ most inept orator” and rejected peerage-hunter, Sir William Mayne !

## CHAPTER III

### THE AGRARIAN REVOLT: SOUTH AND NORTH

ALL this time, while the politicians were being bought and sold and were posing as ill-used heroes on College Green, the country whose real interests they habitually disregarded was given over to misery, famine, and crime. Casual visitors in view of a doubled or trebled rental might talk of the "unexampled progress" of Ireland, but this increased wealth did not reach the common man ; rather it flowed away from him, and many districts were seething with agrarian revolt caused, if the witnesses are to be believed, by sheer misery and oppression. Townshend set himself to inquire into the local disturbances, and his determination to get at the root of the mischief did not endear him to those whose actions, or whose negligence, were impugned. A gentry who could not rule and a church that could not teach constituted a poor foundation on which to build up a State, but under the sway of the Undertakers these were the interests always first consulted. Absenteeism and the middleman and tithe systems were a main cause of bad husbandry and recurrent famines, but the Irish Parliament showed no inclination to provide the remedy.

Writing in 1764, three years before Lord Townshend's arrival, Bush, in his "*Hibernia Curiosa*," states that he had never met such scenes of misery

## THE WHITEBOYS

and oppression. The landlord, the parson, and the priest came upon them in turn, until "the poor reduced wretches have hardly the skin of a potato left them to subsist upon." And as a result "the high roads throughout the southern and western parts are lined with beggars. The case of the lower class of farmers is little better than a state of slavery . . . and this indeed must be the case while the lands are 'canted' in small parcels of twenty or thirty pounds a year at third, fourth, and fifth hand from the first proprietor. From the most attentive and minute inquiries at many places I am confident that the produce of this kingdom is not above two-thirds at most of what by good cultivation it might yield. Yet the gentlemen, I believe, make as much or more out of their estates than any in the three kingdoms, whilst the lands for equal goodness produce the least."

Earlier in the century the wholesale tendency towards throwing land into pasture had caused great distress, and the Irish Parliament had in 1727 passed an Act requiring that five acres out of every hundred should be under the plough ; but to the statute this note has been appended : "This law, although a perpetual one, has never been observed nor attended to in a single instance." It was, says another writer, "as dead as the letters of it, for all the rich were delinquents and none but the impotent poor were left to enforce the performance of it." Mr. Lecky quotes from an undated pamphlet of this period which speaks of "seeing the best arable land in the kingdom in immense tracts wantonly enjoyed by the cattle of a few petulant individuals, and at the same juncture our highways and streets crowded with shoals of mendicant fellow creatures."

Out of all this had sprung the Whiteboy organisa-

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

tion, one of the most terrible agrarian movements in the history of Ireland. Some trace its origin to tithes, some to rent, some to clearances of cottars in order to make room for cattle. No doubt all these had their share, but the enclosing of commons appears to have been the immediate cause. As grazing grew more and more valuable, great tracts of commonage were enclosed, taken away from the tenants without legal right and without compensation, whilst the Grand Juries, composed of those who profited by such proceedings, uniformly rejected all claims for compensation. In the winter of 1762 the movement of resistance and retaliation became general in certain counties. Bands of men set out at night disguised with shirts worn over their clothes (hence the name of "white" boys) levelling enclosures and killing or mutilating cattle. The local authorities were helpless, as usual, and clamoured for soldiers from Dublin.

For eight or ten years this went on. The movement, at first, possibly, in the hands of well-meaning but misguided men driven mad by suffering and injustice, soon degenerated into an organised conspiracy of tyranny and crime, interfering with and dictating under terrible penalties the business and social relations of the countryside. The Whiteboys claimed to regulate not only rent and tillage, but the price of cloth and the wages of labourers, and their decrees were enforced by outrage and murder, the burning of houses and the torture of offenders. Ferociously severe measures of repression followed, measures that seemed "calculated for the meridian of Barbary," says Arthur Young, who adds that some of them "would tend more to raise than to quell an insurrection." The local authorities denied that the movement was agrarian and insisted that

## BARBAROUS REPRESSION

it was a political conspiracy of French origin, whilst the Irish House of Commons passed resolutions about "the Popish insurrection in Munster." "From all of which," concludes Young, "it is manifest that the Gentlemen of Ireland never thought of a radical cure from overlooking the real cause of the disease, which, in fact, lay in themselves and not in the wretches they doomed to the gallows. Let them change their own conduct entirely, and the poor will not long riot."

There is, in fact, no trace of disloyalty in the modern sense in the proclamations and notices of the Whiteboys. Rather did they appeal in all cases to the example of England as against the oppressions of the Irish Parliament and landowners. They invariably declared their loyalty to the Crown and their attachment to the principles of the Constitution. "We are as loyal to our King and country as you are," says one proclamation, whilst another speaks of their "500,000 men" as being "entirely devoted to his Majesty's service." A very interesting paper of somewhat later date in the State Paper Office concludes : "Now, dear brethren, ye will give me leave to inform ye that I declare myself as true and faithful a subject as any in Ireland, both to King and Government. In England when the tenant's lease is expired no man will dare cant him or his children off their farm, nor will the landlord dream of setting to any other person but the occupier. This is the fair, honest mode of proceeding practised in England, which mode shall be established in this kingdom."

Lord Charlemont, himself a northern landlord, also disclaimed the idea that the movement was political. "The real causes," he says, were "exorbitant rents, low wages, want of employment, farms

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

of enormous extent let by their rapacious and indolent proprietors to monopolising land-jobbers, by whom small portions of them were again let and re-let to intermediate oppressors and by them subdivided for five times their value among the wretched starvers upon potatoes and water ; taxes yearly increasing, and, still more, tithes which the Catholic, without any possible benefit, unwillingly pays in addition to the priest's money ; misery, oppression, and famine." Lord Townshend's Government introduced a Tenants' Protection Bill to meet some of these evils ; but, as he reported to Lord Rochford, it "had been defeated by the popularity-hunting party in the House of Commons."

Meanwhile there was agrarian trouble in the north as well as in Munster. The condition of the Scottish Colony in the north-east was in many respects better than that of the small tenants in the south ; but they too were aggrieved by the payment of tithes for the support of a church to which they did not belong, by county rates that were shamefully misapplied for private purposes, and by a rapidly increasing rental. It was the jobbing of the Grand Juries and the requirement which compelled the smaller farmers to give six days free work of man and horse on road-making that provoked the first outbreak early in the 'sixties. Parties of youths with oak leaves in their hats paraded the country, declaring that they were made to work, not on the public roads, but on the demesnes and farm roads of the gentlemen. Combinations were formed to refuse such work and also to resist the collection of tithe. The usual outrages and the usual repression followed ; but the Oak Boys were never a very formidable body, and they soon disappeared.

## THE HEARTS OF STEEL

Ten years later came the Steel Boys or Hearts of Steel, a much more serious organisation, with wider aims and fiercer leaders. The Northern Colony in Ireland, it must be remembered, was all through the eighteenth century most closely and intimately connected with the North American Colonies. The flow of emigrants from the North of Ireland was enormous relatively to the population of the two countries ; trade also was large and growing, and the Ulster colonists sympathised whole-heartedly with the views then beginning to stir in Boston and Philadelphia.

The story of the Donegall leases has been told with so much moral indignation and poetic fire by Mr. Froude that only the outline need be given here. North as well as south the contention in Ireland was that when a tenant had made his farm valuable it was unjust to confiscate his improvements and let the farm at a higher rental to a new tenant. When Lord Donegall's leases in County Antrim expired he let the land to a group of Belfast merchants, who proposed to sublet at a competition rent. The district affected was soon in a flame at what Froude characterises as "a flagrant and enormous act of tyranny." Arthur Young, on the other hand, defends Lord Donegall, and so it may be well, without indulging in strong language on either side, to quote two or three contemporary documents. We have already alluded to the letter \* written from Tyrone by Captain Erskine of Lord Drogheda's Light Dragoons to Mr. Lee, Lord Townshend's private secretary. It speaks of lands being "subset six deep," of the malversation of the county cess and of the tenants being "squeezed to the very utmost."

\* Dungannon, April 10, 1772.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

Earlier in the letter Captain Erskine describes the condition of the north as "very alarming to everybody who has any regard for its prosperity," and while commanding the action of certain magistrates in repressing the disturbances, questions their judgment in "meting out rigorous punishment to the unhappy and deluded offenders." He explains his point thus : "When the consequence of driving six or seven thousand manufacturing and labouring families out of Ireland comes to be felt I question whether the rectitude of those gentlemen's intentions will be held by the world as a sufficient excuse for the irreparable damage they are thereby doing. That examples should be made of the principal offenders in each county I suppose every one sees the necessity of ; but should justice be strictly executed on each unhappy wretch who comes under the lash of the law, it will indeed effectually quiet the country, but at the same time render it desolate. And the more truth there is in the complaints of the levelling spirit of the inhabitants, the more it will have that effect, as such a spirit itself sufficiently prompts them to settle in America. It seems to me that the first thing to be considered in all insurrections is whether the complaints of the insurgents are well or ill founded. Should the causes of the present riots be looked into it will be found that few have had juster foundations, that the poor wretches have much to plead in their excuse, having had many hardships put upon them which the law may perhaps warrant but can by no means justify."

After some further details the writer proceeds : "They complain of being driven out of their lands by monopolisers, when they offered as great a rent ; of those monopolisers refusing to subset to them

## THE ULSTER EMIGRATION

but at such a rent as would make it impossible for them to subsist, and of a most exorbitant cess laid on each county by the Grand Jury which is avowedly turned into jobs for the advantage of private people. A few facts which all the country acknowledges the truth of will show how much foundation there is for these complaints. Lord Donegall, upon his leases falling in, wanted to raise upwards of £100,000 by way of 'gorsham,' which the farmers, not being able to raise, two or three merchants in Belfast were preferred to them, though they offered more than the interest of that money besides the rent. By this stroke a whole countryside was driven from their habitations. What was to become of them? They must either go to America or take the lands at any rate that the Belfast merchants chose to let them."

Lord Townshend had acted promptly on hearing of the disorders. Captain Erskine, whose letter is above quoted, was attached to a large force of military sent north under the command of Major General Gisborne to restore order in the five disturbed counties of Antrim, Down, Armagh, Londonderry, and Tyrone. His constant complaint was that the local authorities left everything to the military. "Had the civil magistrates done their duty in the beginning," he says, "these disturbances might in all probability have been very easily suppressed, but by neglecting them they have been obliged to require the assistance of the military. . . . I exhorted the noblemen and gentlemen whose names are subscribed to the application to repair to their respective counties and to exert themselves as magistrates in repressing these disorders."

Later on the Viceroy again writes reporting progress and giving the result of his inquiries as to

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

the cause of the “very extraordinary” fact that peaceable people “in the wealthiest and most flourishing parts of the kingdom” should be up in arms. “I have very great reason to fear,” he says in a letter \* evidently intended to be shown to the King and which evoked a striking reply from George III., “that the very high price which gentlemen put upon their lands and, of course, the great oppression which the lower order of people labour under in these parts, are the probable causes of the present discontent, and without doubt the remissness of the magistrates in the execution of their duty has contributed much to these violences. Your lordship will be surprised to hear that notwithstanding the almost incredible number of magistrates which have been made of late throughout this country, General Gisborne cannot find one to act even at Lurgan, the chief residence of the discontented and which he proposes to make his headquarters. . . . I have spoken to my Lord Chancellor upon this subject, and he has promised me that upon complaint to him he will strike out of the commission the names of such magistrates as refuse to do their duty.”

Then follows the passage quoted in an earlier chapter to the effect that “neither the laws nor provincial justice” are properly administered, the Grand Jurors disposing of the county cess as suits their private convenience and leaving the lower classes “in a state of poverty not to be described. I am sensible,” Lord Townshend then goes on, “that the best or any disposition of troops is only a temporary remedy against evils unexplored, for I am told that the Committee of Parliament never inquired into nor probed them to the bottom.

\* Townshend to Rochford, March 18, 1772.

## THE KING'S LETTER

. . . In my last despatch I mentioned that these risings first began in the County of Antrim upon particular grievances unchecked and unrepelled. The spirit hath spread itself rapidly to other parts and hath been caught by numbers who have joined, as is usual, from imaginary grievances and a dislike to all government."

And the King's answer shows that, with all his limitations, George III. could see the facts of the situation better than the Dublin politicians, who declined to inquire into or "probe" them. "It has given the King great pleasure," writes Lord Rochford,\* "to hear that the disturbances are likely to be quelled without danger or further effusion of blood; but his Majesty's humanity was at the same time greatly affected by learning your Excellency's opinion that they owe their rise to private oppression and that the overgreediness and hardness of landlords may be a means of depriving the kingdom of a number of his Majesty's most valuable and industrious subjects. The King does not doubt but that your Excellency will endeavour by every means in your power to convince persons of property of their infatuation in this respect and to instil into them principles of equity and moderation which, it is to be feared, can alone apply an effectual remedy to this evil. Those gentlemen who have exerted themselves on this occasion by doing their duty as magistrates will deserve your Excellency's particular notice."

There was ample evidence to support the contention, endorsed by Lord Townshend and accepted by the King, that this agrarian revolt had its origin in intolerable injustice. These northern insurgents

\* Rochford to H. E. the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, April 6, 1772.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

were all Protestants and generally of the Scots Church, and the Presbyterian clergy of the district in which the trouble originated issued a Serious Address and Admonition\* which strongly appealed to the Viceroy's feelings of justice and good government. He made out a copy of it and transmitted it to the Government in London, underlining certain passages with his own hand. It is drawn up by the members of the Presbytery of Templepatrick and is one of the sanest and honestest documents that the troubled history of the time called forth. It begins by reprobating the crimes committed in the district "by some evil-minded persons to the evident disquiet of society and the notorious violation of the rights and properties of individuals, such as maiming and killing cattle, burning houses, destroying hay and oats and extorting money and arms from the quiet and peaceable subject, vowing with the most execrable oaths the destruction of their lives and properties in case of refusal." Then follows the passage underlined by the Viceroy : " Now although we the members of the Presbytery cannot but lament the heavy oppression that too many are under from the excessive price of lands and the unfriendly practice of many who contribute to that oppression by proposing for their neighbours' possessions, by which means they are too often deprived of the improvements made by their fore-fathers and themselves which may be the unhappy occasion of such illegal measures, yet we are convinced and do affirm that such means of redress defeat their own end, because quite inconsistent with the general good of society. . . . And further

\* With this should be compared the equally remarkable declaration issued by Dr. Dillon, Archbishop of Tuam, in 1798, *vide p. 288.*

## THE “LAND GRABBERS”

as ministers of the Gospel of Peace we earnestly beseech you and solemnly obtest you by the duty you owe to your God, to your King, to your country, and to yourselves and posterity to abstain from and guard against all impious, illegal, and inhuman actions. Let not such things be known amongst you, but in all godliness and honesty lead quiet and peaceable lives as becometh those who profess themselves followers of the meek and holy Jesus.”

And the Hearts of Steel in County Down have themselves left a record of their grievances and claims in a document which also found its way to London. It shows the bitterness caused by the eviction of Protestant settlers and the giving of their farms, at an increased rent, to those whom we have since learnt to call “land grabbers.” The petitioners represented : “ That we are all Protestants and Protestant Dissenters and bear unfeigned loyalty to his present Majesty and the Hanoverian Succession : That we who are all groaning under oppression and have no other possible way of redress are forced to join ourselves together to resist. By oversetting our lands we are reduced to poverty and distress, and by our rising we mean no more but to have our lands that we could live thereon and procure necessities of life for ourselves and our starving families. That some of us, refusing to pay the extravagant rent demanded by our landlords, have been turned out and our lands given to Papists, who will promise any rent. . . . May it please you to inquire into the cause of our grievances and lend your hand to eschew the evils which seem to threaten the Protestants of the north : and let not false suggestions of men, partial to their own cause, inflame your wrath against innocent and injured persons who are

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

far removed from the ear of Government, and any other means of redress. Oh that the cry of the oppressed might reach the throne of Britain! Our mild and gracious Sovereign, from his well-known goodness, would extend his care to the suffering Protestants in the north of this kingdom." But the men "partial to their own cause" were entrenched in power in the Irish Parliament, and, in spite of the King's personal remonstrance against their "over-greediness," "hardness" and "infatuation," there was no redress granted either to Whiteboys in the south or to Hearts of Steel in the north. The former remained at home and perpetuated the Agrarian discontent and crime, whose results are with us to this day. The latter swarmed off to America and there rallied to rebellion in due time.

Lord Townshend is represented in the current histories as the most unpopular and unworthy of Viceroys. On one occasion sixteen enraged peers drew up a document in which they attacked him as one "who, in contempt of all forms of business and rules of decency, heretofore respected by his predecessors, is actuated only by the most arbitrary caprice to the detriment of his Majesty's interests, the injury of this oppressed country and the unspeakable vexation of persons of every condition." And Mr. Lecky speaks of him as "one of the very small number of Irish Viceroys who have been personally disliked." Disliked he certainly was by the Dublin Parliament and by the eloquent politicians, whose incapacity and corruption he so mercilessly reported and caricatured. And they had good cause. He threw a flood of light on the dishonesty, greed, and lack of true patriotism, which characterised them and all their

## TOWNSHEND AND HIS CRITICS

works. To suggest that it was he who "corrupted" these men or "inaugurated the reign of bribery" on College Green is absurd. His original intention, as is clear from all his utterances, was to govern the kingdom solely by appeals to the public interest. At the very outset he was met by the demands of the Undertakers that the Government of the country, with all its emoluments and perquisites, should be handed over to them and their friends. He refused and resolved to fight them with their own weapons. His aim, seeing the class of politicians he had to deal with, was, as he repeatedly explains in his despatches, to make members realise that it was safer and more honourable—as well as more profitable—to depend on the Government than on the professional jobbers. To talk of patriotism, one way or the other, seems beside the question. The interests of the common people of Ireland never had a moment's consideration from politicians who were only interested in maintaining and strengthening the penal laws, and calling on the Government to send more and more soldiers to put down Whiteboys and Hearts of Steel.

Townshend, on the contrary, was really interested in "probing" and where possible remedying the complicated misery of the people. He himself went south to investigate the state of the country and sent emissaries to the north for the same object. And the result in each case was the same. The misery and the disorder were the result of the "hardness" and the negligence of those placed over them. And this, no doubt, is what was in the minds of the protesting peers when they accused their accuser of acting "to the unspeakable vexation of persons of every condition." "Baratariana,"

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

the volume of satires against Townshend issued by Flood and Grattan and Langrishe, is dreary reading now after a century and a half, and it is difficult to appreciate the point of much of its laboured sarcasm and bombastic declamation. Three passages, however, are sufficiently clear. In one he is taunted with having come "to establish Government in Ireland on its own authority," and to "destroy the Undertakers"; instead of which it is suggested that at the time of writing he had, on the contrary, "made their party the party of the nation." If this were so it does not argue much for the public spirit or intelligence of the little Ascendency coterie who called themselves the Irish nation and who regarded all the affairs of the country from the point of view of their own interest. The Undertakers were admittedly corrupt and incompetent, and if the nation had possessed any public spirit or honesty it would have supported Townshend in striking down the usurpers of power and in effecting a reform of the tenancy laws and in the method of assessing and collecting the tithe and the local rates. If after that, Townshend had shown any tendencies towards corruption they would, at any rate, have been in a position in which they could assail him with clean hands and clean consciences.

Another obvious charge in "*Baratariana*" is an allusion to Townshend's convivial habits. He is described as "a plump man with a merry, round, unstudious-looking countenance: a jovial companion of great festive mirth, preferring even the latter end of a feast to any part of a fray. . . . One perfectly regardless of pomp, dignity, or parade, going about scattering his proverbs to common passengers as he walks the streets." But perhaps the quality

## “ BARATARIANA ”

that rankled most was that which found expression in his habit of caricaturing and ridiculing those with whom he was thrown into contact, and whom he thought rightly or wrongly worthy of his contempt. In the mock Epitaph in “ Baratariana ” this quality is referred to as follows :

He was a Mimick,  
A Scribbler,  
A Decypherer of Features,  
A Delineator of Corporeal Infirmitiy ;  
But he was not  
A Statesman,  
A Governor,  
A Soldier,  
A Friend,  
Or a Gentleman.

As to Townshend’s drinking habits it is, we confess, a little difficult to discuss this charge very seriously in the Ireland—or for the matter of that the England or the Scotland—of that day. One of his successors notoriously drank himself to death in an endeavour to keep up with his company, and it was admitted that one of the first qualifications for a Viceroy or a Chief Secretary was his liquor-carrying capacity. One of Macartney’s correspondents in Dublin refers with pride to the qualities of his successor, Sir John Blaquiere, “ who can discharge the bottles without disclosing any secrets.” And Chesterfield, who had been through the ordeal, writes by way of retrospect to one of his Irish correspondents during Townshend’s viceroyalty : “ I am convinced that could an exact calculation be made of what Ireland has lost within the last fifty years in its trade, manufactures, manners and morals, by drunkenness,

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

the sum total would frighten the most determined guzzler of claret or whisky into sobriety.” Townshend was, let us admit, a “guzzler” of claret, as were his predecessors and his successors, but the young men of the College or the Parliament House published no volumes of satires directed to their address. And the reason is simple. Townshend drank deep, but when his potations were over he turned with fresh zest to his exposure of the roguery and the rascality, and the embezzlements and the thievery that throve in high places in Dublin. He discovered, and he told the King, that the discontent and the conspiracies and the insurrections of the country were due not to “French Emissaries” or to “Popish plots,” but to those who passed as high-minded patriots, while misgoverning and grinding the faces of the poor. And it was for this that he was so cordially hated by those whose vices he exposed.

The elegants of “Baratariana” further complained that he had “barbarous manners,” and was regardless of “dignity.” So far as this charge can be investigated the facts amount to the very simple circumstance that whilst scrupulous about the real dignity of his position on occasions of high state, Townshend was audaciously unconventional in lesser matters. The well-known caricature in “Baratariana” represents him at a Council, lounging in an ordinary chair with his waistcoat half-unbuttoned and one leg thrown carelessly over the other, his bob-wig being in obvious contrast to the full-bottomed wigs of most of his councillors. He was, says a letter writer quoted by Mr. Lecky, on terms of familiarity with everybody, and was good-humoured, disinterested, benevolent, and sincere. He would set out alone in the early

## "RAPTURE AND REFORMATION"

mornings with a stick in his hand, plainly dressed—always in cloth of Irish manufacture—and ready to take part in whatever was going on. One winter day he picked up an old blind beggar, who had fallen on the ice, carried him in his arms into a neighbouring house and had his wounds attended to. His jokes and proverbs and anecdotes were as ready as those of Abraham Lincoln. They were in everybody's mouth, and if they sometimes bore hardly on the castle oligarchy, possibly those outside the official ring enjoyed them none the less. The first resident Viceroy was, let us admit, unpopular with those whose power he came to break ; but we have seen no evidence to prove that he was unpopular in any other circle.

Indeed there is evidence to the contrary. Sir George Macartney—who himself seems to have quarrelled with Townshend later on—says in his "Account of Ireland" that at the outset the attack on the Undertakers was popular : "The people," he says, "were rejoiced beyond measure at the happy tidings. Those who had been long in leading-strings, but had never been led to what they looked for, felt new hopes rise in their bosoms, and flattered themselves that the day of enfranchisement had come. Golden visions of profit and of honour opened on the eyes of every patriot. He who had disdained the thraldom of the Undertaker was ready to wear the livery of a resident Viceroy, and the most inveterate Republican became a convert to the new theory of Government. All was rapture and reformation. . . . The Undertakers, against whose usurpation this scheme of residence was levelled, immediately took the alarm, and strenuously used all their efforts to defeat it. They knew, indeed, that opposition if steadily

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

resisted must soon smoulder into insignificance, but they flattered themselves that no Lord-Lieutenant would long persevere in the new plan. If he should, they were resolved to omit nothing on their part to make his situation as uneasy and as unpleasant as possible." Such a collection of scurrility as "Baratariana" must have cost money, and we may presume that the Undertakers believed that in making Townshend's situation "as uneasy and as unpleasant as possible" they had received some value for their outlay.

A word should be given to Townshend's interest in Irish industry and manufactures. We have seen already how he sympathised with the peasantry, at the mercy as they were of Chesterfield's "deputies of deputies of deputies," and how his Tenants' Protection Bill had been defeated by the "popularity-hunting party" in the Irish House of Commons. And at the very moment of his great struggle with the Undertakers—culminating in the "protest and prorogation," which excited so much wrath—we find him planning a scheme which will, he hopes, "prove a very great relief to the poor and industrious part of this city." It was simply to encourage the fashionable people to follow his own example by wearing Irish manufactures. He proposes, he says, in order to contribute "to relieve the distress of the manufacturers"—that is to say of the weavers—to give "a kind of masquerade ball" at the castle, "the company to be dressed only in the light manufactures of the country, and without masks."

The ball duly came off on the Eve of St. Patrick, and was a huge success. We are told that "a magnificent pageant took place"; that the scene when Lord and Lady Townshend opened the ball

## "WILKES AND LIBERTY"

was unusually brilliant, and that the whole affair gave a great impetus to Irish manufactured silks and poplins. But the College Green patriots were quite unhappy about it. If the people were rendered industrious and prosperous, what was to become of those who lived by politics and perorations ? And so the hired mob from the Liberties—the very people who were interested in the development of manufactures—were provided with the usual libations, and were sent out to hoot the carriages and sedan chairs which were stopped till "Wilkes and Liberty" was chalked on the panels, and the occupants were compelled to declare themselves patriots. At all costs Ireland must be saved from those who would undermine the patriotism of her citizens by encouraging them to work and thus to neglect the nobler pursuit of speech-making.

The remainder of Townshend's viceroyalty may be told in a few words. He had shown how a corrupt and incompetent oligarchy could be beaten to its knees by a plain soldier who knew his duty ; but he had neglected to make allowance for the large circle whose craft would be in danger if anything resembling honesty were introduced into the administration of Irish affairs. If this were to go on, Customs Officials might be required to make a complete and accurate return of their receipts ; arrangements for defrauding the revenue by dividing profits with smugglers would be frowned upon ; the £200,000 a year deficiency in the hereditary revenue would have to be accounted for ; Grand Juries might actually be required to give an honest account of the use made of the County Cess. Such a Viceroy was not to be endured, and all the varied forces of vituperation were turned against him. At first, as we have seen, his victory

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

was complete enough. He met his Parliament in February 1771, after fourteen months' prorogation, and the result of the defeat of the Undertakers was apparent in the large majority by which the King was thanked for Townshend's continuance in office as Viceroy. Flood tried to get the House to repeat the resolution asserting its "undoubted privilege" to originate Money Bills, and was beaten by 128 to 105. Pery was elected Speaker in place of Ponsonby, and Hely Hutchinson's support was rewarded by an increase of the salary for the sinecure post of Alnager. But the office and pension-seekers were insatiable. More and more money had to be granted, more offices created, more peerages promised. Every fresh crisis brought forth fresh claims. Hely Hutchinson, as an entry in the Alphabetical List puts it, "held Sir George Macartney in fetters," taking advantage of the necessity of the moment to carry his point. Even after he had secured the office of Provost of Trinity the note is: "He is still dissatisfied and ever will be till he engrosses the stations of Primate, Chancellor, Lord Chief Justice, Provost, &c. &c. &c., in his own person."

The reconstruction of the Revenue Board was justified by an increase in revenue, but on the other hand money was flowing out in "gratifications" of various sorts to Government supporters. When the House met again in the autumn Flood called attention to the deficit and the Government majority displayed an ominous decline. The number of Commissioners of Account had been added to in order to have more offices to bestow, and the departments of Customs and Excise were separated, presumably with the same object. Flood induced the House to censure these changes, the majority

## THE REVENUE BOARD AGAIN

against the Government rising on one occasion to forty-six. The demands of the members and their friends naturally rose as they saw the end approaching. The Attorney-General and the Prime Serjeant—that worthy pair who always seemed to hunt in couples—grew “languid.” As for Lord Tyrone, “his connections,” complains Townshend, “are to be gratified upon every opportunity. Mr. Fitzgibbon, who is an eminent lawyer and in Parliament, asks a bishopric for Lord Tyrone’s brother, who married his daughter, and although this gentleman is not qualified by the Canon Law to take a bishopric on account of his youth, Mr. Fitzgibbon, who moved the address, at the conclusion of the last session now makes it a reason for opposing Government with great rancour and vehemence.”

A couple of months later Townshend had quite lost heart. The English Government had relaxed in its support of the new policy in Dublin. They doubted, Rochford wrote, “whether, in the face of the opposition, it was prudent to carry out the new Revenue Board.” Lord North, it is true, ultimately sanctioned the change, but Townshend felt that the support was lukewarm. He wrote complaining and suggesting resignation. After four years’ fighting he had earned his right to repose unless the Government could see their way to give him better support. “It is only,” he repeated once more, “by a determined resolution of adhering to system, and by constant perseverance that the authority of the English Government can be maintained in this kingdom.” But the English Government had neither system nor perseverance, and it was clear that Townshend’s courageous experiment was to be dropped for the time. Even

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

the Speaker, Sexton Pery, his own nominee for the Chair, deserted and divided the House against the Government. It was now known that the experiment was doomed, but Townshend provided entertainment for Dublin to the last. Lady Townshend had died in 1770, and there were many surmises as to her successor. A relative and *protégée* of Lady Loftus was then the reigning toast in Dublin, and it seemed certain that Miss Dolly Munroe would soon be Lady Townshend. “Baratariana” took the matter up and openly discussed the chances of Lady Loftus’ campaign : “Everything was accomplished in her mind, and sports and pastimes, tilts and tournaments, dance and festivity were proclaimed throughout the castle and the forests of Rafarmo. The Smile of Dorothea was to be the prize of chivalry, and her hand in the dance the trophy of the Governor’s pre-eminence.”

But the match-makers were out. Miss Munroe, it appears, was all the while in love with a humbler suitor, and the Viceroy himself had fixed his affections on one of the “three Graces,” the beautiful daughters of Sir William Montgomery. One Castle gossip wrote to Sir George Macartney in September : “My Lord-Lieutenant says he is glad that he is so soon to leave us ; but I do not believe him, and it is said about town that his acquaintance with Miss Anna Montgomery will make him cast many a longing lingering look behind.” And in May, Anna Montgomery became the second Lady Townshend and blessed him with a numerous family. One does not look for humour in the Black List, that Alphabetical List of M.P.s who have been influenced by Government favours, but the entry regarding Sir William Montgomery reads somewhat quaintly even at this distance of time. At

## "THE THREE GRACES"

the end of the usual list of "gratifications" received it is noted : "And in addition to all Lord Townshend married his youngest daughter, Anne. A steady friend, and an amiable respectable man." Townshend, himself, in spite of his fondness for claret, lived to vote for the Union, and died in 1807 at the ripe old age of eighty-three.

He left Ireland in December and a correspondent writes to Macartney\* : "He received as great marks of applause from the people as I have ever known given to any man in station, however looked up to for popularity." But the politicians were implacable. In the following June another correspondent writes† : "We expect to have a busy winter. Great denunciations are made against the 'tyrant Townshend' as he is called. A thousand inquiries are to be made into the distribution of the Revenue under his administration, and he is to be censured until he is all over black and blue. But amidst the changes and chances of this mortal life, don't be surprised if before the winter is over you should hear him toasted as the only patriot Lord-Lieutenant since the days of Lord Chesterfield."

And Macartney, himself, closes his Account of Ireland with this judicious summing up : "Whatever errors may have been imputed to him it is certain that he acted according to the best of his judgment. He was strongly impressed with the principles of the new system and, as far as was in his power, endeavoured to maintain the King's authority against the Undertakers. Though often unsuccessful he never despaired : Though often repulsed he always returned to the charge : so that

\* December 14, 1772, "Macartney Papers."

† June 1773, Waite to Macartney.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

at last, by dint of patience and perseverance, he was enabled to lay such a foundation as, if strictly adhered to, may render the Government of Ireland secure and independent for ever hereafter."

## CHAPTER IV

### AFTER LORD TOWNSHEND

ALL hopes of system or of continuity in Irish Administration vanished with the appearance of Lord Townshend's successor. As usual the work of one Administration was undone in the next. Lord Townshend was a soldier in the prime of life, who knew what he wanted and was not in the habit of waiting to choose his words when his feelings were roused, and so he was accused of lack of dignity. Lord Harcourt who had been Ambassador to France was a courtier of the old school, who tried to bring the refinements of Versailles to the Dublin Court. Macartney, who did not like him, describes him as "a poor old gentleman whose reigning passions are to be thought descended from a grand Norman family, to look like an old French *militaire*, to live in an Hôtel and to die rich." He arrived at Ringsend at four o'clock on a November morning, and found no one to meet him. A messenger was sent to the Castle for a coach, but the various officials "debated the point so long that his Lordship appeared walking through the castle yard by the light of a lanthorn before the carriage set off." \*

The Undertakers set themselves at once to regain their lost position. The Duke of Leinster gave the new Viceroy a most affectionate greeting, and his son, Lord Kildare, who was to succeed to

\* December 2, 1772, "Macartney Papers."

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

the Dukedom within a few months, stood by his side in the Viceregal box at the theatre. Shannon, Ponsonby, and Flood all came to the front again. Shannon was, as usual, extremely explicit. He put in a list of claims for places and pensions for his friends, and added that if these were granted he could see his way to support the Government for one session, although his ultimate attitude was a matter for further consideration. The Viceroy was of course enjoined from England to exercise all due economy and absolutely to discourage all applications for pensions, salaries, or offices, for new peerages or advancement of present ones, or for the sale of offices. The principle was excellent, but as it was by these precise means that the Government of Ireland was to be carried on, the performance left everything to be desired. In fact the King's sister (the divorced Queen of Denmark) was one of the first to be placed on the list for a pension of £3000 a year. Townshend's rearrangement of the Board of Excise and Customs was reversed and things placed on their old footing, a course that placated Ponsonby's vanity ; but there were five Commissioners and a number of subordinate officials thrown idle by the change, and they had all to be pensioned. So much for economy.

Parliament did not meet till November, but already in April Harcourt was compelled to write : "Our distresses have increased to such a degree that almost an entire stop is put to all payments whatsoever, except for the sustenance of the army, and at times it has been found difficult to find money even for this purpose." As time went on Harcourt became more and more a cypher, and the Government was really carried on by the Chief Secretary, Sir John Blaquiere, in Ireland, and

## BLAQUIERE SOLE GOVERNOR

by Lord North in England. Blaquiere had been with Harcourt in Paris, and had acquired the ascendancy of a strong nature over a weak one. We have already referred to his prime qualification for such a post—"he can discharge the bottles without divulging secrets." At about the same date (1773) Macartney is informed from Dublin that Blaquiere is "the sole Governor of Ireland: his influence is absolute, and he feels his consequence." This correspondent, who was obviously prejudiced, and who speaks of Blaquiere as "an old battered weather-beaten coxcomb," proceeds to remark that "It is not to be expressed how exceedingly obnoxious Blaquiere is to all ranks. Men of birth and fortune can't brook being sent to him by the Chief Governor who defers all to him." But the other correspondent who praises him for his bottle capacity, expresses a different view.\* Blaquiere, he says, "is indefatigable in his office, and obliging in his manner and address. He is warm in his temper, I think, therefore he can't do with a coadjutor. He pays the greatest deference to the House. This procedure has begot much good will to him." That it required some self-control on Blaquiere's part to show "deference" to the Irish House of Commons is apparent from one of his letters written on a subsequent occasion when, on the eve of the opening of a session, he anticipates a stormy session "judging from the asperity of the expression among the outs, and the avaricious coldness and jobbery among the ins."

Money had to be got if the King's business was to be done, and a majority bought at the market price. So Blaquiere adopted the plan—often advocated, but never carried out—of a

\* March 1773, "Macartney Papers."

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

taxation of the rents of absentee landlords. Like the Septennial Bill and the Judges Bill this had been for long on the programme of the popular party, but something always came in the way to prevent its enactment. From the point of view of the interests of Ireland there could be nothing but praise for such a tax. From Swift to Adam Smith great writers had advocated it as tending to check some part of the flow of money out of the country. The amount of the rent was estimated at over £700,000 a year ; and, even at the low rate of taxation proposed, it would have brought in a very welcome relief to the Irish Treasury. Lord North cordially approved and all seemed plain sailing.

But unfortunately for Ireland some of the most influential men in English public life at the moment were Irish absentee landlords or their dependents. Shelburne, the leader of one section of the Whigs, declared that any minister who proposed such a policy "deserved to be impeached" and he pronounced the scheme "incredibly unjust and impolitic." Shelburne, however, was an essentially reasonable and just man, and he submitted the question to Chatham, who pointed out that the principle was a good one and was "founded in strong Irish policy, which is to compel more of the product of the improved estates to be spent by the possessors there amongst their tenants than here in England and in foreign parts." Shelburne now ceased from opposition ; but the Rockingham Whigs called in the help of Burke, who wrote a "remonstrance," which was signed by five great Whig peers and which practically killed the proposal—not the first nor the last time that Burke in his party zeal did a bad day's work for Ireland.

## SHELBURNE AND CHATHAM

Residence in England was not, he said, "a delinquency to be punished or a political evil to be corrected by the penal operation of a partial tax." They "claimed the right of free subjects to choose their residence in any part of his Majesty's dominions" and they "could not refrain from expressing their astonishment at hearing that it was proposed to stigmatise them by a fine for living in a country which was the chief member of the British Empire and the residence of the common Sovereign." The great London companies were also stirred up against a proposal that would tax their revenues, and Lord North began to waver. It was feared that the American Colonies would take up the same cry. Lord Mansfield, said North, had told a member of the Cabinet that a similar Act was passed by one of the Colonies some years ago, and rejected with indignation by the Privy Council, "and that if way is given to this measure we may expect proposals of the same nature from all our Colonies."

The measure was now doomed ; the only question was, who should kill it. Rochfort wrote to Harcourt saying that the Government would stand by its pledge to accept the Bill, but warning him that there would be serious difficulties in the English Council. Harcourt, who had no particular principles about anything, took the hint. It was true that "the decided opinions of some of the wisest and most experienced men in this kingdom (Ireland) and the general wishes of the people for half a century past" supported the proposal, but if it was not wanted in England he would see that it gave no further trouble. The remonstrance of the Whig peers would be circulated, and the Opposition would be "startled" and "alarmed" by the suggestion that it was "an approach to a general

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

land tax." Then, when the time came, "a certain wild, inconsistent gentleman" would be put up to move it in the House, and that would be "sufficient to damn the measure."

Flood had long supported the idea of an absentee tax, but he was now tired of opposition and was making overtures to the Government. Indeed, according to Burke \* he had intended to use the Absentee Tax Bill as a means of "coming over to a Government in an entirely Irish interest." Whether he knew of Harcourt's treachery or not is not clear, but at any rate he surpassed himself in his advocacy of the Bill, and if the Government had not played him false he would have carried it and in addition would have utterly discredited the remnants of the Opposition, which he had arranged to desert. "Mr. Flood," writes Harcourt, "was violent and able in behalf of the measure in a degree almost surpassing everything he had ever uttered before. It would appear as if he meant to take this occasion of utterly crushing to destruction the Duke of Leinster's party and Mr. Ponsonby, against the latter of whom he made such a personal attack as that hon. gentleman, I fear, will never recover." But Harcourt and Blaquiere had played their cards too well for any eloquence to affect the issue, and the Bill was thrown out by 120 votes to 106, although there were not a dozen men in the House who were not in favour of it.

While the House of Commons was throwing away such an easy and equitable source of revenue there was a deficit for the year of £138,000, with a National Debt of £994,890 and floating debts of something like £400,000; but Government "muddled through" at the end. More bounties

\* Correspondence, i. p. 438.

## A "PATRIOT" FOR SALE

were granted on the exportation of corn, and the point which, as we have seen, caused anxiety to more than one Viceroy was settled by a provision that the bounties on inland carriage charged on the hereditary revenue should never exceed £35,000. A quarter of a million was raised by tontine annuities and some small taxes on luxuries were imposed. Parliament, Harcourt reported, was "moderate and respectful," as was indeed natural, for Charlemont tells us that Harcourt's viceroyalty was "a continued job"; but he never told his clients what he thought of them, as Townshend did, and even in writing his secret reports to London he did not drop the grand manner. "I must take occasion to say," he informed Rochford, "that nothing can be so grateful to me, after having been the instrument of obtaining so much from this people, as to put it in my power to make them some return. For, notwithstanding the mode in which business has been conducted, gentlemen very well know how much they have strained the means of this country to satisfy his Majesty of their loyalty and attachment, and I am fearful they would not think themselves kindly treated if some return was not made."

But Harcourt's great triumph was the capture of Henry Flood. Flood was the most powerful leader of opposition the Irish Parliament had ever known, but he had now been fifteen years in the House and he was not satisfied with his position. He had made more than one overture to transfer his great abilities to the English Parliament, having offered £4000 for a seat in 1769. If he could have read the future and seen the meteoric rise of Grattan he would probably have completed the transaction and secured high place in England as

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

a follower of Chatham, whom he worshipped and imitated ; but he remained in Ireland, all unconscious that his days of glory as a patriot were numbered. Grattan had collaborated with him on "Baratariana," but Grattan did not enter Parliament till 1775. Even in Townshend's time it began to be understood that Flood was open to offers from the Government, but after the protest and prorogation of 1769 he had flung off into violent and acrimonious opposition. In 1773 his name already appears in Harcourt's correspondence,\* and in the following year he remarks that "among the many embarrassments of my situation I have found none more difficult than to make a proper provision for Mr. Flood."

Blaquiere, it appears, had formally promised him the first great office that fell vacant, but most of the best jobs were reserved for the Church or the Bar, and Flood belonged to neither. Blaquiere neither liked Flood nor trusted him, but Flood was in earnest and was determined to have his pound of flesh. He had his eye on the high office of Provost of Trinity College ; but Hely Hutchinson, the great engrosser of all offices, was before him, and when Provost Andrews died, quietly secured the appointment from Harcourt. He was already Prime Serjeant and Alnager, offices bringing £900 a year with £1000 a year tacked on to the latter sinecure for his special benefit. These offices he undertook to resign, but he bargained that in lieu of the additional £1000, which he regarded as his own, he should obtain for his own life and that of his sons the office of "Customer" of Strangford, the £1000 being attached to that sinecure. Harcourt had thus two posts to dispose of, and Flood,

\* Harcourt to Rochford, June 17, 1774.

## PROVOST OR ALNAGER

it was suggested, might be made Alnager. Flood rejected the offer with contempt ; he would be Provost or nothing.

Harcourt, who thought everything had been settled, was much perplexed. Blaquiere, if he were not actually working against Flood, did little to help matters. In the Alphabetical List the Chief Secretary has summed Flood up in far from favourable colours. "Formerly engineer and mouth-piece of Opposition," so the entry runs. "Impracticable in his conduct in Parliament, in private life held in abhorrence and detestation by all men of integrity and truth. When Lord Harcourt arrived he affected candour, and promised support. Upon some important questions he supported, upon others equally material to the Government he kept away. In consequence of this conduct an expectation of some very considerable employment was held out to him." And this "very considerable employment" he now demanded peremptorily ; he was not to be put off with the leavings of Hely Hutchinson, whom only a few years before he had himself been holding up to odium for accepting office.

"Mr. Flood," wrote Harcourt to Rochford, "is greatly offended. I saw him yesterday and he complained most bitterly. . . . He took occasion to set forth his important services which he thought very justly entitled him to the preferment which had been given to Mr. Hutchinson without even making him a tender of it. . . . He laid great stress on the difficulties and obstructions which he could have thrown in the way had he been disposed to be adverse." Hutchinson, it was true, had sacrificed two jobs in order to become Provost, but Flood "observed that he had made as great

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

if not a greater sacrifice, meaning his popularity and reputation, which he had risked in support of the Government." He had done with the Castle : "it would be a lesson to everybody to be very cautious in the future in their dealings with ministers," and so forth. For a patriot to lose his reputation by deserting to the Government and then to fail to get his job was indeed humiliating, and the good Harcourt evidently sympathised with Flood. "I told him I thought the faith of Government was pledged to make an ample provision for him, and if it was not done I should be ready to acknowledge that he had been deceived and ill-used."

Harcourt suggested a vice-treasurership, one of three Irish sinecures, at £1700 a year each, generally reserved to reward English placemen. North was sympathetic, but he wanted all these vice-treasurerships for his own friends, and he suggested that the ancient and honourable office of President of Munster might be revived with no duties and a large salary for Flood's special benefit. The Viceroy seems to have regarded this as trifling with the subject, and brought the Premier back to book. He must have the vice-treasurership for "the acquisition of Mr. Flood, circumstanced as things are, cannot be purchased at too dear a rate. . . . His terms, however great and exorbitant they may appear, are little in comparison to the trouble he may give or even of the expense that may be incurred on his account if no method can be devised to engage his service."

The matter dragged on for months, but the story may be told shortly. North gave way, and the vice-treasurership was offered. Flood, still in a temper, refused it ; then he would accept it if the salary were thrown on England instead of Ireland.

## FOX AND HIS PENSION

Harcourt was at the end of his temper and of his courtesy. Flood might take it or leave it ; in any case the Castle was discharged of its promises and would offer nothing further. After some more moving and counter-moving, each side waiting to see if the other was in earnest, Flood accepted. "Since I was born," says Harcourt, "I never had to deal with so difficult a man, owing principally to his high-strained ideas of his own influence and popularity."

Indirectly this piece of political huckstering laid bare another characteristic raid on the Irish Treasury. Jenkinson, afterwards Lord Liverpool, had to be jobbed out of a vice-treasurership to make room for Flood. He received as compensation the Clerkship of the Pells. This was held at the moment by Charles James Fox, whose devotion to the liberties of the Irish people took the form of a snug sinecure. Fox had only succeeded his brother in this post in 1774, and he was already eager to realise it for ready cash. So he sold the clerkship for £30,000 down, and in addition an Irish pension of £1700 a year for thirty-one years. The story is a very curious one and the details somewhat obscure. Mr. Froude says that North "induced" Fox to surrender his sinecure of £2300 a year "in return for £30,000 in hand and £1700 a year." From this it would appear that Ireland paid both the £30,000 and the reduced pension, and as Jenkinson promptly got the salary raised from £2300 to £3500, the job cost Ireland £1200 a year for Jenkinson and £30,000 and £1700 a year for Fox. Mr. Hunt, however, in his "Irish Parliament, 1775," states that Fox, a ruined gambler and in need of ready money, sold the office, "the pension being divided into several sums to enable Fox to sell it more easily." In any

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

case the transaction was a fraud on the Irish revenue, and in the case of one who so loudly professed his devotion to economy and to the liberties of Ireland it was doubly discreditable. Fox's eulogists discreetly overlook this incident.

But the biter was bit. The publicity given to the matter drew attention to the fact that it was illegal for Fox to sit in the English Parliament whilst drawing an Irish pension. "It seems," says North to Blaquiere, "that no man holding a pension during pleasure or for a term of years can sit and vote in Parliament without being liable to pay twenty pounds a day. I do not know what method he may take to secure himself. . . . This you will keep secret, for though I fear it will be known it ought not to be known by you or me"—an interesting touch of chivalry in such matters as between bitter political opponents. Fox, however, had to surrender the pension in June 1776. In this same year, in the course of which Harcourt resigned and was succeeded by the Earl of Buckinghamshire, we find Flood apparently more than ever disgusted with Ireland, offering himself to North for a seat in the English Parliament, only to be again rebuffed. And this directs attention to the more than equivocal attitude adopted by Flood during the American War, an attitude which placed him at a terrible disadvantage in his great quarrel with Grattan.

In the struggle with the American Colonies over the right of taxation there was from the first a considerable party in favour of the Colonies. Nowhere was this party so strong as in Ireland, north and south. The American contention was, in its main outlines, that for which the Irish Parliament had more than once made a stand, and

## ULSTER AND AMERICA

amongst the northern Presbyterians especially there were the closest ties of kinship with America. The "Plantation" in Ulster and the "Plantations" in North America were not dissimilar in origin and in character, and from time to time the wave of emigration that had settled temporarily in Ulster began again to move further west. Just before the crisis came to a head there had been one of these waves. In 1773 the Linen Board reported that many thousands of the best manufacturers and weavers, with their families, had gone to seek their bread in America, and that thousands were preparing to follow. As Mr. Froude puts it, "in the two years that followed the Antrim evictions thirty thousand Protestants left Ulster for a land where there was no legal robbery and where those who sowed the seed could reap the harvest. They went with bitterness in their hearts, cursing and detesting the aristocratic system of which the ennobling qualities were lost and only the worst retained." Other causes evidently contributed to the depression, for in 1774 the inspector of linen manufactures told a committee of the House of Commons that "more than one-third of the weavers throughout the kingdom were unemployed; that in the County Longford, where twenty years before two thousand looms were at work, there were at present less than twenty, and that not less than ten thousand Irish weavers had within the last two or three years emigrated to America."

When it was too late the Dublin junta began to realise what they had done; for the mischief that had been wrought to Ireland and the Empire in persecuting and driving out some of the staunchest of the people could no longer be ignored. Those who had reached America were preparing armed

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

resistance, those who remained were in warm sympathy with them. "The Presbyterians in the north, who in their hearts are Americans," wrote Harcourt to North in 1774, "are gaining strength every day, and by letters written by designing men whom I could name, from your side of the water, have been repeatedly pressed to engage Ireland to take an adverse part in the contest." Chatham asserted that on this question Ireland was with America to a man, and if the services of Flood had not been secured for the Government the discord between the two Parliaments might have culminated in a definite and dangerous quarrel.

Blaquiere, indeed, was indefatigable. In one of the preliminary skirmishes he just managed to ward off defeat in the House. "Your thread-paper friend," he wrote North, "lost flesh he could not well spare" in the conflict. He saved the situation by holding the fears of a General Election over the heads of the House. Under the Octennial Act the 1769 Parliament had not long to run; members did not wish the evil day hastened, and the Chief Secretary's hint that an adverse vote would be followed by an immediate dissolution gained the day by a narrow majority. The leading Irish Catholics, who then and long after looked to the English Government as their protector against the narrowness and harshness of the Colonial Parliament, rallied to the side of the Government and sent in an address offering "two million loyal, faithful, and affectionate hearts and hands in defence of his Majesty's sacred person and Government against all his enemies," and specially "reprobating and abhorring the unnatural rebellion that which has lately broken out amongst some of his American subjects."

But Blaquiere was of a severely practical turn of

## AN "UNNATURAL REBELLION"

mind. His business was to manage the Irish Parliament and in that body, as he pointed out, "the allegiance of the Papists" was of no importance, since they could control neither speech nor vote. All his energies were devoted to preparing for the election. "You must," he explained to North,\* "by pension or place sink a sum of not less than £9000 per annum, exclusive of the provision that may be found requisite for rewarding or indemnifying those who are connected by office with the administration. There are not less than from thirty to forty members, who, if not assisted, cannot secure their re-elections. Their seats in the new Parliament cannot be purchased at less than 2000 guineas . . . and an addition of pension or salary, as circumstances may require, is scarce an adequate compensation for the advance and loss of so large a sum. . . . I have already been obliged, with my Lord - Lieutenant's leave, to promise additional salaries or pensions to" (here follow the names of ten importunate members) "most of whom were wavering in their faith."

Flood had been the great asset of the Government in the last year of the old Parliament. At the critical point he threw all his weight into the scale against the American Colonies and defended North. He talked like the loftiest of high-flyers. The Colonies must be kept under control, because if they are allowed to go free "destruction will come upon the British Empire like the coldness of death. It will creep upon it from the extreme parts." When Irish troops were being removed from Ireland for service in America, Flood defended the step. As Harcourt explained, the reinforcements coming at such a time and with the express assent of the Irish

\* Blaquiere to North, November 1775.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

Parliament, would be "a convincing proof to America and to the whole world of the decisive part Ireland takes in the quarrel." The only part that gave trouble was the north, where Harcourt complained of "the violent opposition made by the Presbyterians to the measures of the Government." "In fact," he said, "if they are not rebels it is hard to find a name for them." Flood defended the Government through thick and thin and described the troops as "armed negotiators" rather than oppressive invaders. "Mr. Flood, I am told," writes the gratified Harcourt, "spoke most eloquently and his performance was allowed to be very great and able. He seems to be very cordial and will, I make no doubt, prove a very important acquisition to his Majesty's service."

Grattan was just then preparing to enter Parliament, and no doubt he was paying due attention to the ways of hired patriots and to many other things. Flood's acceptance of office and his defence of Government policy were noted and compared, for when Flood had forfeited his office and was endeavouring to oust Grattan from his position as leader of the Opposition it was Grattan's memory of this speech that supplied him with his most crushing and merciless taunt. He spoke of Flood as standing in the House "with a metaphor in his mouth and a bribe in his pocket, a champion against the rights of America, the only hope of Ireland and the only refuge of the liberties of mankind." And even Flood had no counter-stroke for such a blow.

It may be as well here, although a little prematurely, to recount the other incidents of that famous scene, probably unparalleled in any Parliament. During the exciting events of 1782-3, Flood more than once strove to upset Grattan by posing

## GRATTAN AND FLOOD

as the extremer patriot. Grattan had quite openly and honourably accepted a vote of money from Parliament for his services, and this Flood tried to twist to suit his purpose. Towards the end of 1783 the explosion came. Flood, to strengthen the Volunteers, pressed for a reduction of the Army. Grattan, on the other hand, full of regard for his friend Fox, then in office, pleaded patience and pointed out that Flood when he accepted office under Harcourt, had supported the Government in every extravagance. Flood thought his moment had come, and so it had—with a difference. He was not afraid of Grattan he declared. “I will meet him anywhere on any ground by night or day. I would stand poorly in my own estimation and in my country’s opinion if I did not stand far above him. . . . I am not the mendicant patriot who was bought by my country for a sum of money and then sold my country for prompt payment. I was never bought by the people, nor ever sold them.”

Grattan had long been prepared for this, and he sprung at the opening. He was an honest man and Flood was a rogue, and the House knew it. He can scarcely be blamed if he used his advantage to the utmost. In the interests of order he struggled for a while with the “third person,” and discussed the hypothetical case of a politician whose life had been “first intemperate, then corrupt, and finally seditious.” He would say to such a man, he cried (and here he turned to Flood and spoke so that every word told), “I would say, ‘Sir, your talents are not so great as your life has been infamous. You were silent for years and you were silent for money. When affairs of consequence to the nation were debating you might be seen

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

passing by these doors like a guilty spirit, waiting for the moment of putting the question that you might hop in and give your venal vote ; or at times, with a vulgar brogue, aping the manners and affecting the infirmities of Lord Chatham ; or like a kettle-drummer, lathering yourself into popularity to catch the vulgar. You can be trusted by no man. The people cannot trust you. The Ministers cannot trust you. You deal out the most impartial treachery to both. You tell the nation that it is ruined by other men while it is sold by you. You fled from the embargo, you fled from the Sugar Bill. I therefore tell you in the face of the country, before all the world and to your beard you are not an honest man.' "

Flood, who himself had a reckless and ungoverned tongue, was crushed and speechless before such a tirade. On that night, at any rate, he must have realised that his vice-treasurership and his privy councilorship had been bought too dear. The inevitable duel was arranged, but both were taken into the custody of the serjeant-at-arms and in the most commonplace fashion bound over to keep the peace. Civil relations were afterwards resumed between the rivals. Flood from time to time still took a fairly prominent part in public affairs. In the Volunteer movement he played a leading part at Conventions, and in the House he sometimes swayed the majority. But he never really recovered his position, and after trying his fortune for a few sessions in the English Parliament he retired from public life, grew eccentric, moody, and morose, and died in 1791.

Going back to the winter of 1775-6, Blaquier's activities in preparing for the new House of Commons were crowned with success. The Parliament

## THE FALL OF PONSONBY

met—the Parliament of the Irish Declaration of Independence—and Government had its majority. Ponsonby again tried for the Speaker's chair, but Shannon and Loftus had deserted him, and in spite of the support of the new Duke of Leinster he was defeated by 141 votes to 98. The Government majority was solid, all seemed smooth sailing for the moment, and Harcourt and Blaquiere retired, making room for the Earl of Buckinghamshire. Lord Harcourt had not added to his laurels. Townshend's strong and masterful disposition and his open flouting of the Undertakers, it was said, had rendered the country difficult to manage without lavish expenditure of public money. So Harcourt had been sent to try gentler methods, to conciliate the "aristocratic faction" and to rule by kindness and sympathy. The result we have seen throughout this chapter: jobs increased and efficiency not secured. Instead of reduced expenditure it had gone up by £80,000, with nothing whatever to show for it except a steadily rising Civil List and Pension List and a National Debt of nearly a million.

## CHAPTER V

### THE REVOLUTIONARY ERA

WITH the beginning of the American War, Ireland enters on the revolutionary era. It is true that for a variety of reasons Parliament gave very little trouble during the early stages of the war, and the aristocratic section of the Catholics displayed, as we have seen, the most effusive loyalty ; but the country was beginning to look far beyond Parliament. Extreme spirits in the north had already been driven into Republicanism of a more than academic tinge, and everywhere new ideas were in the air. Neither Viceroys nor Parliaments counted for much in this movement, and some of the “ transient and embarrassed phantoms ” sent over from London made no mark whatever on the country. What really counted was that Ireland was denuded of troops and that an embargo was laid on exports which ruinously affected Irish prosperity and strengthened the cry for “ free trade ”—that is to say, for freedom to export Irish produce to the Colonies and to foreign countries. The American Colonies had been great purchasers of Irish linen and Irish provisions, and the war and the embargo closed that market. Smuggling took on an enormous impetus, especially after 1778, when France joined in the war, and American quick-sailing privateers showed themselves all round the coast. Bankruptcy and starvation threatened the country, and men

## THE NORTHERN REPUBLICANS

were asking why Ireland remained quiet whilst America was in arms for freedom.

And arms were not long lacking, in the north, at any rate, which, now as ever, entertained the supremest contempt for the Dublin Parliament and all its doings. So long as the American revolt was in what might still be called the constitutional stage, Ulster was enthusiastic and unanimous in its support, whilst Catholic Ireland was indifferent or hostile. At the meetings and banquets held in preparation for the elections of 1776 in Antrim and Down, American resistance to "oppression" always received notice. "The Protestant Interest All the World Over," "The Glorious and Immortal Memory of King William," "Religion without Priestcraft" and "A House of Commons for Ireland Chosen by, not Imposed upon, the People"—these had been, so to say, the charter toasts of the Ulster Whigs. But now their scope became wider, and such toasts as "May the Tyranny and Persecution the Fathers Fled from in Europe never be imposed on the Sons," or "Wisdom and Firmness to the American Assemblies," begin to appear in the list. But it was a family quarrel based on rights guaranteed under the British Constitution, and even the suggestion of French interference brought back old memories of "Popery, Brass Money, and Wooden Shoes," with which things the stubborn north would have nothing to do.

Thurot's landing at Carrickfergus in 1760 and his attempt to raid Belfast led to the assembling within four days of over 5000 men, armed mainly with old firelocks and scythes, but fully prepared to give the French invaders a warm reception. The idea that the family dispute in America could by any chance be made the pretext for a foreign invasion of Ireland

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

met with no sympathy, and when in February France joined the American insurgents and was thus involved in war with England, Belfast at once began vigorously to arm so as to be prepared for any repetition of Thurot's raid.

That the famous volunteers, who afterwards nearly brought English Government in Ireland to an end, were in their origin a loyal body admits of no doubt; that they degenerated in sections into a revolutionary body is simply an illustration of the stirring and unstable times upon which not only Ireland but all Europe was entering. The Government of Ireland was utterly helpless when, in April 1778, Paul Jones with the *Ranger* (18 guns) sailed into Carrickfergus Bay and challenged, fought, and captured the sloop *Drake* (20 guns) stationed there for the protection of the lives and property of his Majesty's subjects. It is true that in August, four months after the British flag had been struck to the Americans within sight of the coast, Mr. Richard Heron, Chief Secretary, wrote from Dublin Castle to the Sovereign of Belfast to inform him that "there was reason to apprehend" the appearance of privateers and an attempt at a landing on "the northern coasts of this kingdom." But as he also stated that the Government could offer no assistance except "a troop or two of horse or a part of a company of invalids," Belfast thought it full time to see to its own protection. Indeed, two companies of volunteers had already been enrolled and were parading and training "with the greatest regularity," so that in a subsequent letter Heron reported that he had his Excellency's commands to say that "he very much approved of the spirit of the inhabitants of Belfast, who had formed themselves into companies for the defence of the

## THE VOLUNTEERS

town." In January 1779, Belfast, in order to be ready at sea as well as on land, manned and equipped a privateer on her own account—the *Amazon* (14 guns), and in June close on 4000 men were enrolled in Belfast and the two neighbouring counties. Next month they duly paraded "in uniform with orange cockades, and fired three volleys with their usual steadiness and regularity in honour of the Battle of the Boyne."

The Irish Parliament voted £300,000 for the repair of fortresses; but the Treasury was empty, and La Touche, the leading Dublin banker, did not see his way to advance any more money to the Government. Alarmist accounts began to come in from the South of Ireland regarding the disposition of the Roman Catholics and their inclination in favour of France, and in consequence a somewhat belated policy of conciliation and concession towards that party was forced on the Irish Parliament. Lord North, in fact, was thoroughly alarmed. Lord Amherst had been writing him from Geneva of a "revolt" that was in preparation in the West of Ireland instigated by French agents. "You may depend," he assured the Premier, "on its authenticity and that at this moment many friars are going secretly from France to Ireland to set it going. Depend on this being true, and that all the Roman Catholics in the West of Ireland have been ripe for a revolt for some time." And the Bishop of Derry, who had not at this time taken up the exuberant patriotism of the Dublin Convention, wrote from Rome in 1778 that "the Roman Catholics exasperated by repeated disappointments, are ripe for an almost general revolt." His suggestion, which chimed in with the ideas of the English ministry, was that there should be enacted "a legal

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

tolerance of that silly but harmless religion which they now exercise illegally."

So a Catholic Relief Act was passed after some very curious manœuvring. Luke Gardiner, afterwards Lord Mountjoy, introduced it with the approval of the English Ministry, and it was concerned chiefly with the vexatious restrictions on the holding of land. The Irish Parliament fought sturdily for its privileges, and the proposal to permit Catholics to acquire freeholds was amended so as to restrict their tenure to those 999 year leases which are still a feature in Ireland. The Scots in the north took advantage of the occasion to make an attempt to secure the repeal of the Test Act with its insulting exclusions, and the Opposition, led by Shannon and Loftus (now Lord Ely), supported this in order to kill the whole Bill. The Presbyterian relief clause, in fact, only passed the Irish Parliament in virtue of assurances that it would be struck out by the English Privy Council. This was done, and Shannon and his friends then made the success of their own plot a reason for opposing the whole Bill when it came back from England to the Irish Parliament. This little incident throws a good deal of light on the way in which business was transacted on College Green in those days. It also explains the contempt of the northerners for the Dublin Parliament and their keenness for parliamentary reform.

Lord Charlemont's explanation of the Relief Bill of 1778 was given afterwards in his autobiography. "Government," he says, "was now induced to court the Papists by their fear of the Protestants, and wished to oblige and strengthen that party, which, as well from the influence of a servile religion as from its precarious situation in the country, was

## AMERICANS AND THE NORTH

likely, they thought, to be wholly dependent on them." And Horace Walpole claims to have heard a person in very high office say that "the Presbyterians were the worst subjects the King had and that the Roman Catholics were better subjects." To increase the confusion we have the assertion of an Irish member who was much in London that "if the French land in the south every man there will join them, and if the Americans land in the north they will be gladly received there by the Presbyterians." There is in all these opinions a great deal of the reckless exaggeration that characterises Irish politics; but such were the views sedulously poured into the ears of those who were supposed to rule the country from Dublin Castle, and they serve to explain the complete breakdown and surrender of the next few years. As one speaker said, the war had ruined the linen trade, the embargo had ruined the farmers; artisan and peasant were starving; the highways were once more filled with crowds of wretched beings half naked and starving.

The scheme of Chatham and of Townshend for strong and vigorous government in the interests of the people rather than of the parliamentary oligarchy had been abandoned as too troublesome, and the result was universal corruption in high places, misery and distress among the people and a complete paralysis of Government. There were not enough soldiers in the country to guard the barracks and protect the Custom Houses. It was natural enough for Lord Buckinghamshire to welcome the formation of the Belfast volunteers, but the English Government was in terror of the idea of another Boston in the north of Ireland, and Lord Weymouth wrote to the distracted Viceroy that he must prevent the corps from assembling. He should disarm them

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

and insist on nominating trusty officers. It was more easily said than done, for the movement was spreading like wildfire through the Protestant north, and any attempt at interference would have been a ludicrous not to say a dangerous failure. At no time had the Ulster Colony received the smallest protection or assistance from the talkative gentlemen in Dublin, and they had neither respect for them nor confidence in them.

In 1779 Paul Jones turned up again, not simply with a sloop, but with a ship of the line and three frigates. He picked up a couple of English frigates on the way, and if he did not attempt a landing on the Antrim or Down coast the Belfast volunteers knew very well that it was not the fear of Lord Buckinghamshire's "part of a company of invalids" that deterred him. By the end of September of that year the Volunteers numbered over 40,000 men well equipped and armed and officered and led by men elected by the rank and file.

Government in Ireland had, in fact, collapsed from its own rottenness, and for some years to come it was the Volunteers and not the Castle or the Parliament that dominated the country. The movement had spread to Dublin, and when Parliament met in October, ministers had neither a solid majority nor a policy. The policy of the volunteers was freedom of trade, and it had unquestionable right on its side. Hussey Burgh, a man of striking ability and courage, who now held the office of Prime Serjeant, had already put the issue perfectly plainly to the Viceroy. "England," he said, "must either support this kingdom or allow her to support herself. Her option is to give in trade or to give in money; without one or the other the expenses cannot be supplied. If she gives

## "PERFECT FREEDOM OF TRADE"

in money she suffers a country of great extent and fertility to become a burden instead of a benefit. If she gives in trade, whatever wealth we may acquire will flow back upon herself. Were I asked what is the most effectual measure for promoting the common wealth and strength of his Majesty's subjects of both kingdoms I answer, an equal and perfect freedom of trade, without which one of these kingdoms has neither strength, wealth, nor commerce, and must become a burden on the other." The argument is unanswerable. The scheme proposed was that proposed by William Pitt six years afterwards. And then it was refused by the Irish Parliament.

Meanwhile it was North and Buckinghamshire with whom, unhappily, Ireland had to deal, and a direct or courageous policy on this or any other question was beyond the measure of their strength. North dreaded the outcry that would be made by the English manufacturing towns, for, as another Viceroy reminded Pitt, "Bristol and Liverpool clamoured and made an outcry like a shorn hog" whenever the removal of the restrictions on Irish trade was proposed. So the Viceroy met the House with a simple and meaningless speech. Grattan seized the opportunity and won the first of those triumphs that made him for a few brief years something like a national dictator. Through Hussey Burgh, who was preparing to revolt, he knew of the Viceroy's stupidity and weakness, and was ready. He promptly moved as an amendment to the Address "that it is not by temporary expedients, but by a free export, that the nation is now to be saved from impending ruin," and he made the rafters ring with the first of a series of orations which no one on the Government side could answer

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

or dared attempt to answer. Hely Hutchinson and Scott, the Attorney-General (both men above the average in ability and in parliamentary address), tried in vain to divert the storm. Hussey Burgh threw over the Government; Flood, who had been bought and silenced a few years before, found his voice and supported the amendment. The unhappy Chief Secretary, Sir Richard Heron, did not even dare to challenge a division, and the Government was defeated unanimously! A vote of thanks to the volunteers was also carried unanimously, and when Pery (the Speaker) followed by the whole House went to the castle to present the amended Address, he passed through armed files of Dublin Volunteers who lined the streets, with the Duke of Leinster at their head. The Viceroy of Ireland was as helpless in his own capital as was Louis XVI. when, ten years later, he was escorted to the Tuilleries and Paris was in the hands of the National Guard.

Buckinghamshire wrote to London that he was powerless and had to give way, but London gave him no help. He suggested that some popular orator might be bought over, but nothing came of that. He had already a battalion of bought orators on his list, but the trouble was that they could not be depended on. The Duke of Leinster was approached, but that also led to nothing. On King William's birthday the volunteers again turned out and marched round the statue on College Green with two cannon on which were the menacing inscription: "Free Trade, or This!" Belfast demonstrated, and sent peremptory instructions to its members to vote short supplies on well-reasoned grounds: "That the condition of this kingdom is so truly affecting and deplorable

## THE REFORMS OF 1780

that our manufacturers even in this time of cheapness and plenty are yet starving for want, and that the little shipping which we formerly had employed are rotting in our ports. That nothing can relieve us from impending ruin but the enjoyment of a free and unrestrained trade, a right to which we are entitled by the laws of nature, by the principles of our constitution and by the interest which the Empire at large must ever have in our strength and happiness." The Government had neither arguments nor force to oppose to these demands, and it surrendered ignominiously.

For the moment Grattan ruled the situation and the long-pent-up stream of reforms flowed like a torrent. All was once more "rapture and reformation," and if speeches and votes and good resolutions could save a country Ireland was saved. Parliament granted supplies for only six months. It passed a special Act relieving the northern Presbyterians from their old grievance of the Test. Lord North was as helpless to stem the torrent as was the Viceroy himself. Ireland was allowed a widely extended right to trade with the East and with the West, with America and with the Levant. The prohibitions on wool, glass, and hops were removed and the English bounty on Irish linen was renewed and confirmed. The tension was to some extent relieved, and in February 1780, the wretched Viceroy was able to report that "upon the whole it is my private opinion that, barring insurrection or something nearly resembling it, I shall go through the business of the session with success." It was a modest hope, and it was fulfilled. The volunteers still dominated the situation, and there was an occasional riot that placed Dublin temporarily in the hands of the mob from the

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

“Liberties”; but many notorious abuses were removed and during the spring of 1780 the capital seemed happy.

Over a good part of the country, however, Government, as Lord Hillsborough complained to the Viceroy, was simply “dissolved.” The people were in good humour at the concessions, but if they chose to be in ill-humour there was no one capable of checking them. Cork, a most important and enterprising place of export, furnished an example. In time of war Cork flourished openly as a base of supplies for British fleets and soldiers, and, more or less secretly, by smuggling out similar supplies to France and Spain. Every one in Cork knew it, and no one objected. The French and Spanish fleets had to be fed somehow, and why shouldn’t Cork make a profit out of it as well as anybody else? Early in the year, however, it came to the ears of the English Government (possibly from a trade rival) that a Cork contractor was loading cargoes of salt beef for delivery to the French fleet. The Government sent orders for the seizure of the vessels. The Viceroy replied that such a thing was not to be thought of; that the people would look on it as a revival of the detested embargo, and that there would be dangerous violence and resistance with which the authorities were not in a position to deal. North pressed the point. Stopping these provisions, it was pointed out, was “equal to the gain of a battle at sea”; but the Irish executive could suggest nothing more spirited than the purchase of the stores from the Cork contractors by the Crown itself over the heads of the Frenchmen.

Meanwhile the Viceroy had to keep his majority in Parliament together, and he found his situation “beyond measure disagreeable.” Grattan was in a

## THE MUTINY BILL

scarcely happier position. His friends in England thought that he was pressing them ungenerously with constantly growing demands; but Grattan knew that if he once halted or declared himself satisfied Flood would make a bid for his place. The Belfast volunteers were calling for the amendment of Poynings' Law and for the abolition of the Declaratory Act of George I., under which the English House of Lords was the court of ultimate appeal, and in matters political the volunteers in general took their note from Belfast.

It was under such circumstances that Grattan introduced his Declaration of Independence—a series of resolutions to the general effect that "no power on earth but the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland is competent to make laws for Ireland." The course of the debate was peculiar. Grattan's oratory was irresistible and no one but the Attorney-General and young Fitzgibbon (afterwards Chancellor and Earl of Clare) seriously stood by the Government. But the majority were uneasy and apparently frightened at the lengths to which Grattan's speeches might lead them. Flood interposed and suggested an adjournment, and the resolutions were dropped for the time. The Viceroy recognised that whilst the majority was reluctant to break with the Government, the whole system was undermined and the structure might give way at any moment.

Yelverton, a northern member, introduced a Bill to amend Poynings' Law, and Gervase Bushe gave notice of an Irish Mutiny Bill, thus ignoring the English Act under which the forces in Ireland had heretofore been governed. The Privy Council gave the Viceroy no support, and all that the Chief Secretary could do in the House of Commons was to secure the postponement of the Mutiny Bill for

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

a fortnight. When the fortnight was past the Government was badly beaten and the Bill passed rapidly through both Houses. Then, as in the case of Grattan's resolutions, a strange manœuvre rendered the whole measure farcical. The Bill came back from England as a perpetual, not an annual Mutiny Act. Grattan and the Volunteers raged and passed hostile resolutions, but the House of Commons, which had decided that it should assume direct control of the Irish Army, accepted by a majority of nearly two to one an English amendment which, till the Act was repealed, took the control of the Army out of its hands for ever. At this time, in fact, the House was a quite unaccountable body. No doubt the fact that this was Lord Buckinghamshire's last session as Viceroy and that he was known to be drawing up the usual list of peerages and pensions had something to do with abating the patriotic enthusiasm of the House.

At the end of 1780 the Earl of Carlisle followed the Earl of Buckinghamshire, the Government showing its sense of the situation by removing three more regiments from Ireland and leaving the country more than ever in the power of the Volunteers, who demonstrated and passed political resolutions with increasing frequency and fluency. They were now estimated at from 80,000 to 100,000 men, and from this date it was seen that some of their own leaders from Lord Charlemont down were growing a little afraid of them. Lord Carlisle's first session opened in October 1781, and it soon became clear that Flood meant mischief. Hitherto he had kept a foot in either camp, but now he broke loose and openly joined the Opposition. Yelverton again introduced his amendment of Poynings' Law, but when it came up for consideration in December

## THE DUNGANNON CONVENTION

the news had arrived of Lord Cornwallis' disaster at Yorktown. Yelverton, who was a patriot first of all, substituted for his motion an address of sympathy and of loyalty to the Crown. Flood and Grattan endeavoured to clog this address with a recital of Irish grievances, but they were decisively defeated. Later on Flood, still trying to push to the front, moved for a committee on the question of Poynings' Law, and was again badly beaten. The House of Commons knew him and distrusted him, but outside the House his influence was growing, especially with the Volunteers, who looked to him all the more since he was unpopular in Parliament.

It was in 1782 and 1783 that this extraordinary military and political force reached the height of its strength. The surrender of Yorktown broke Lord North's power in England and completed the demoralisation of the Government in Ireland. The House of Commons, it was alleged, was only playing with the country ; it was time for the Volunteers to meet and dictate a policy. The House had more than once protested against armed demonstrations in the streets of Dublin, and declared them unconstitutional and their resolutions false and scandalous libels on Parliament. But now there was no hesitation or concealment. A great meeting of delegates of the Ulster volunteers was summoned to meet in Dungannon, and the first of the series of resolutions was to the effect "that a citizen by learning the use of arms does not abandon any of his civil rights." An excellent doctrine, whose point, however, lies in its application. In the mouths of the bolder spirits of the Volunteers it meant a claim of power to override that of Parliament.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

There had been considerable trouble in drawing up the resolutions to be passed by this great Convention, consisting as it did of over two hundred delegates representing one hundred and forty-three corps of armed volunteers. Charlemont, Grattan, and Flood all collaborated, and on certain points they were very far from being in agreement. The Ulster Volunteers were exclusively a Protestant body and their great principle, as we have seen, was the maintenance of the "Protestant interest." There were twenty resolutions in all, and they covered the whole field of Irish politics of the day, but the crux lay in that dealing with "Catholic relief." Charlemont and Flood were decidedly against conceding the vote to the Catholics, and Grattan would only grant it "in so far as was consistent with Protestant supremacy." The form ultimately moved and accepted, with two dissentient voices, was as follows : "That we hold the right of private judgment in matters of religion to be equally sacred in others as in ourselves. Resolved therefore that as men and as Irishmen, as Christians and as Protestants, we rejoice in the relaxation of the Penal Laws against our Roman Catholic fellow subjects, and that we conceive the measure to be fraught with the happiest consequences to the union and prosperity of the inhabitants of Ireland."

This was on February 15, 1782, and a week later Grattan opened the campaign with renewed vigour in the House of Commons. After twelve years of Lord North the Whigs in England saw themselves within sight of office, and the hopes of their friends in Ireland rose high. In the past we have seen mischief wrought to Ireland by the ignorance, the prejudice, the mere sluggishness of

## GRATTAN'S DECLARATION

English parties ; during the next couple of years the mischief was exaggerated tenfold as Rockingham, Shelburne, and, most of all, the Fox-North Coalition with Portland as Premier, followed each other with no consistent policy either in giving or in withholding. Grattan moved once more his Declaration of Independence. The Attorney-General warned the Protestant landowners, who were so eagerly and unanimously declaring against the validity of English statute law in Ireland, that the validity of their title to every acre of their estates depended on English law, and that if the Act of Forfeiture and the Act of Settlement were declared invalid there would be a good deal of land open to be fought for by the old proprietors. The majority took fright at this, and Grattan was badly beaten on a motion for postponement. But the Government could hardly congratulate itself on such a reprieve, for, as Carlisle warned the Ministers, "through the whole course of the debate the principle of Ireland not being bound by Acts of the British Legislature was most strenuously supported by every man who spoke on either side, even by those the most zealous in support of the Government."

Yelverton proposed to meet the legal difficulty of danger to landed property by a Bill for "quieting" possessions held under the Forfeiture Act ; but the air was full of the ideas of Catholic Emancipation, and it was obvious that if a Protestant Parliament could pass a "quieting" Bill the first Catholic House could pass a disturbing one. Mr. Gardiner, indeed, had a Bill before the House at the moment, by which, on taking the oath of allegiance and the declaration against foreign jurisdiction, Catholic and Protestant would at once be put on

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

the same footing as regards property, education, and other matters, and it was meeting with outside support. Meanwhile the Irish House adjourned for Easter, and before it reassembled Lord North's Ministry had foundered, and Lord Rockingham had succeeded him. The usual change of officials in Ireland followed, and all was chaos.

This was Grattan's chance, and he took the fullest advantage of it. In one of his last letters to England Carlisle had warned his Government that "Mr. Grattan from a natural enthusiasm and Mr. Flood from different motives had concurred with great earnestness in bringing forward to public discussion every question tending to assert the independent right of legislation in Ireland." He had succeeded in repelling every attempt, but the "restless and reasoning disposition" of the Volunteers was creating a new and dangerous situation, and every danger was intensified by the arrival in power of the new Whig Ministry, with Rockingham and Shelburne and Fox and Burke, who had all been backing Charlemont and Grattan, amongst its most prominent members. They had already tried to check Grattan, but Grattan, partly on account of what Carlisle called his "natural enthusiasm" and partly from fear of Flood, would not be checked. "Will no one speak to this madman? Will no one stop this madman Grattan?" Burke had once written, and now he found him more determined than ever to carry matters with a rush.

Parliament had been specially summoned for April 16. The Duke of Portland (the new Viceroy) only arrived on the 14th, and he naturally expected that as the representative of a friendly Whig Government he would be allowed some time

## VOLUNTEERS IN ARMS

to measure up the situation. Fox, indeed, had already begun to talk big. "He was now," he said in the House, "responsible for the honour of his country, and he would not consent to see England humbled at the feet of Ireland." But Grattan was not to be restrained. On the 16th the Volunteers were once more out in arms and lining the streets in their gorgeous uniforms. All Portland's excuses and evasions and pleas were brushed aside. When the formal address was read and the reply moved, Grattan rose in a House seething with excitement to move for the last time his great resolution. The scene has often been described, and the arguments are familiar. The speech, we are told, "has passed into the standard manuals of oratory among the school books of two hemispheres"—an entirely suitable resting-place for inspired platitudes." Grattan's "strange swaying gestures" were compared by one observer to the action of the mower as his scythe sweeps through the long grass ; by another to "the rolling of a ship in a heavy swell." Every sentence told, and the cheers swept from the floor to the crowded galleries, and were answered by the populace in the streets.

"I have spoken so often on the subject of your liberty," he said, in the most famous of the flashes of eloquence with which the speech scintillated, "that I have nothing to add, and have only to admire by what heaven-directed steps you have proceeded until the whole faculty of the nation is braced up to the act of her own deliverance. I found Ireland on her knees. I watched over her with an eternal solicitude. I have traced her progress from injuries to arms and from arms to liberty. Spirit of Swift : spirit of Molyneux; your genius has prevailed. Ireland is now a nation. In that

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

new character I hail her : and bowing to her august presence I say, *Esto Perpetua.*"

The reference to arms was necessary for the occasion, and no doubt it was cheered like the rest ; but it was impolitic, and before many months Grattan had reason to be sorry for it. By his side there sat a bolder and more unscrupulous spirit, who could strike a louder note on that string, and who was destined ere long to shatter for a time the edifice of Grattan's popularity with the volunteers. Indeed, some such thought may have passed through his mind as he glanced at the saturnine visage of Henry Flood, for he branched off into a more pacific strain and suggested that the armed men, their task accomplished, might now dissolve and leave the field once more to the orators.

" It was not the sword of the Volunteer," he cried, " nor his muster, nor his spirit, nor his promptitude to put down accidental disturbances, or public disorder, nor his own unblamed and distinguished deportment. That was much, but there was more than this. . . . There was a continence that confined the corps to limited and legitimate objects. . . . And now, having given a Parliament to the people, the Volunteers will, I doubt not, leave the people to Parliament and thus close specifically and majestically a great work. Their associations, like other institutions, will perish : they will perish with the occasion that gave them being, and the gratitude of their country will write their epitaph." The Volunteers, as we shall see presently, had no ambition for an epitaph just yet : they had no intention of " perishing," nor did they regard their work " specifically and majestically " closed. But Grattan had his day of triumph.

## “IRELAND A NATION”

He concluded by moving an amendment to the Address in which the claims of the Irish Parliament were specifically recited. Ireland was by right a distinct kingdom, governed by her own King, Lords and Commons, and none other. In the maintenance of that separate right the liberties of Irishmen consisted, and they would only yield it with their lives. Against three great infringements of that freedom they specifically protested : (1) The Declaratory Act (6 Geo. I.) under which the British Parliament claimed to legislate for Ireland and to decide Irish Cases on final appeal : (2) The power of the Privy Council under Poynings' Law to initiate; to suppress or to alter Irish legislation : (3) The perpetual Mutiny Act (which, as we have seen, that very House of Commons had passed a couple of years before by a two-to-one majority). The House supported Grattan unanimously, and adjourned to await the King's reply. Grattan and Charlemont were good Whigs, and friends and supporters of the Rockingham Government. But they were none the less resolved to maintain their advantage. Grattan sent a message to Shelburne that there was no place for negotiation or compromise. “If our requests are refused we retire within ourselves, preserving our allegiance but not executing English laws or English judgments. We consume our own manufactures and keep on terms of amity with England, but with that diffidence which must exist if she is so infatuated as to take away our liberty.”

And the mortified Portland had to write to the Secretary of State that the Whigs were not regarded with that awe and worship which they regarded as their due: “You are not,” he said, “considered here better friends of the Constitution

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

than your predecessors." The Irish leaders he added, construed all his assurances as a matter of course. They accepted them "not as the consequence of a revolution in their favour" but as the result of their own strength. "It is no longer the Parliament of Ireland that is to be managed or attended to. It is the whole of this country. It is the Church, the Law, the Army, the merchant, the tradesman, the manufacturer, the farmer, the labourer, the Catholic, the Dissenter, the Protestant, all sects, all sorts and descriptions of men, who, I think, mistakenly on some points, but still unanimously and most audibly, call upon Great Britain for a full and unequivocal satisfaction." It is doubtful whether the King or the Whig leaders were the more enraged at finding such a situation when they had, as they thought, matters of greater importance urgently calling for their attention in two hemispheres.

The approaching peace, the Viceroy went on to explain, was "a matter of perfect indifference to them with regard to the subject-matter of their demands. They know and feel their strength, and are equally sensible of your situation and resources. They are not so ignorant of the effects of a peace as not to know that if you had the good fortune to conclude one to-morrow it would not be in your power to send over such a force as would compel them to relinquish their claims: and having so recent an example of the fatal consequences of coercive measures they are in no fear that Great Britain will attempt a second experiment of the same sort." And so the chagrined and disillusioned Duke concludes: "I undertook this important and arduous employment with hopes which I had soon the mortification to be obliged to relinquish."

## THE DECLARATORY ACT

Shelburne suggested negotiations leading to a "distinct agreement" regarding the limits of the proposed independence and the reserved power of Great Britain in matters of trade and foreign affairs. Grattan argued, quite correctly from his point of view, that the question was one of surrender, not conference. Grant our demands and then we can discuss future arrangements was his ultimatum. We demand, he wrote to Fox, simply the measures that are indispensable to our freedom. "I agree with you in wishing for a settlement, but nothing less than what has been stated will satisfy Ireland. There must be no foreign legislation, no foreign judicature, no legislative council, no negotiation, no commissioners." And the Viceroy renewed his warning. "If you refuse or delay to be liberal, Government cannot exist here in its present form, and the sooner you recall your Lieutenant and renounce all claim to this country, the better." Less than six weeks before Fox had declared that as one responsible for the honour of his country, he would never consent to see England humbled at the feet of Ireland. And now Fox himself, in the English House of Commons, had to stand up and propose a surrender of England's claims point by point. On May 17 he announced that the Government had decided to concede the Irish demands, absolutely and unconditionally. The Declaratory Act and the Appellate Jurisdiction were to go; Poynings' Law was to go; the Perpetual Mutiny Act was to go. "The intestine divisions of Ireland," he wound up, in one of those vague and meaningless generalisations of which he was a master, "are no more: the religious prejudices of the age are forgotten. The Roman Catholics, being restored to the rights of men and

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

citizens, will become an accession of strength and wealth to the Empire at large, instead of being a burden to the land that bore them.” The resolutions were passed : Bills followed the resolutions and were also duly passed.

When this result was announced in the Irish Parliament on May 27, 1782, all was rejoicing. Grattan at once moved an address expressive of satisfaction and gratitude, and there can be little doubt that he believed and meant all that he said, although events so sadly belied his hopes. There was an end even of suspicion. “Great Britain,” he said, “gives up *in toto* every claim to authority over Ireland.” To ask anything further —this was aimed at Flood who was already beginning to agitate the Volunteers in favour of an express Renunciatory Act—“would be a foolish caution, a dishonourable condition ; and the nation that insists upon the humiliation of another is a foolish nation. . . . The whole tenor of the conduct of the British Minister has been most generous and sincere.” And in his address he assured his Majesty that no constitutional question would any longer exist that could interrupt the harmony between the two nations.

The session in the Irish Parliament was one of leaps and bounds. More fragments of the penal laws were repealed, for the relief of both Roman Catholics and Presbyterians. Poynings’ Law was further shorn of its restrictions : a Habeas Corpus Act was passed : the Mutiny Act was limited to two years to suit a Parliament whose sittings were still biennial, and the Irish judges were at last assured of security in office during good conduct, as in England. Grattan, himself, proposed a free and unconditional grant of £100,000 towards

## THE POSITION OF GRATTAN

furnishing additional seamen for the British navy. We have seen that in Townshend's time the retention in Ireland of a certain proportion of the troops paid for by Ireland was a privilege jealously guarded. But now, at the suggestion of Shelburne, the Irish Parliament authorised the King to withdraw additional men up to 5000 if required. Portland pointed out that this savoured somewhat of a Greek gift, as it threw the country still more into the hands of the Volunteers, but at any rate the Irish Parliament showed promptitude in meeting the wishes of England.

And Grattan himself was not overlooked. In a country where every public action was bought and sold, and the price haggled over, it would have been difficult to find fault if a man in Grattan's position had accepted a grant or a pension as so many others had done. Acting in concert with Charlemont he had on the formation of Rockingham's Administration definitely refused office. Now it was known that something would be done and Portland stepped forward with an offer of an annuity to Grattan and his heirs, and a mansion in the Park—the present Viceregal Lodge in fact. But Grattan would accept nothing from an official quarter. The House proposed to vote him £100,000, and ultimately, the vote being reduced to £50,000, Grattan was persuaded to accept. It was, he said, his "retaining fee" for the service of Ireland. He would accept no office and enter into no engagement. The whole affair was eminently creditable to Grattan—only a very envious or a very base mind could call him a "mendicant patriot" for accepting such a gift under such circumstances. The time when these words were to be applied to him was not far distant, the time

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

indeed when all the fair vision of 1782 came to an end in distrust, discord, conspiracy, and rebellion. But whatever may have to be said later on of Grattan's statesmanship or foresight or lack of capacity in handling a desperate situation, it must be admitted that in a time of almost universal corruption he stands out with clean hands.

Grattan had achieved what he called the Independence of his country. He had forced England, in his own phrase, to "give up *in toto* every claim to authority over Ireland." In other words he had enabled the Colonial Parliament—the Parliament of what Molyneux and Swift regarded as the Irish nation—to assert its independence of the Mother Country. Grattan was satisfied : all trouble was over : it would be ungenerous, in his view, to retain even a suspicion of the cordial relations of the two countries in the future. But were the Volunteers of Ulster satisfied ? They had long been looking across the Atlantic rather than to College Green, for their ideals of independence. Were the bulk of the inhabitants of Ireland—four-fifths of whom had no representation in the Irish Parliament—satisfied ? And, most important of all, was the arrangement which satisfied Grattan—that of two equal and independent sovereign assemblies, under one King—an arrangement that could possibly work in a constitutional monarchy ? It was the breakdown of Grattan's Parliament on all these points that, sixteen years later, forced the statesmen of both countries to reconsider the whole question.

Grattan had emancipated the Irish Parliament, but it carried within itself the seeds of decay and dissolution. Its ultimate disappearance was as inevitable as that of the French National Assembly.

## A REAL REVOLUTIONIST

It had no popular basis : it was merely the mouth-piece of one of the most selfish and incompetent oligarchies in Europe. It had no inherent executive authority, for its executive was appointed in England, and its power in Ireland was overshadowed by that of the Volunteers. It had not even real legislative authority, for, as Fitzgibbon was to remind it before long, its enactments were subject to the Great Seal of England, and that Seal was under the control of the English Ministry.

Wolfe Tone, of whom we shall hear a good deal later on, was a real revolutionist, and at the very outset of his career he saw that Grattan had grasped too soon and too eagerly at a sham victory. Writing in 1791 he declared that, so far from having won dignity and independence, as Grattan claimed, Ireland had, in fact, "no National Government," and that "The Revolution of 1782 was the most bungling, imperfect business that ever threw ridicule on a lofty epithet by assuming it unworthily.

"The Revolution of 1782," he went on, "was a Revolution which enabled Irishmen to sell at a much higher price their honour, their integrity, the interests of their country : it was a Revolution which, while at one stroke it doubled the value of every borough monger in the Kingdom, left three-fourths of our countrymen slaves as it found them. . . . Who of the veteran enemies of the country lost his place or his pension ? Who was called forth to station or to office from the ranks of opposition ? Not one. . . . Yet this we boast of and call a Revolution."

The answer to which is that Grattan never was a real Revolutionist, and did not want a Revolution. His position was that of those who stir up great forces without knowing their nature and without

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

being capable of controlling them. Even if Ireland had been free and if the Revolution had been accomplished, his fate would have been that of the Girondins, and his epitaph would have been written by Carlyle :

*“There is a class of Revolutionists named Girondins whose fate in history is remarkable enough. Men who rebel and urge the lower classes to rebel, ought to have other than formulas to go upon. Men who discern in the misery of the toiling complaining millions, not misery, but only a raw material which can be wrought upon, and traded in for one’s own poor hide-bound theories and egoisms, to whom millions of living fellow creatures, with beating hearts in their bosoms—beating, suffering, hoping—are ‘masses,’ mere explosive masses, for blowing down Bastilles with, for voting at hustings for ‘us’ : such men are of the questionable species.”*

## CHAPTER VI

### GRATTAN'S PARLIAMENT IN ACTION

GRATTAN's Parliament, regarded as an instrument of practical work, was surely the most impotent and unworkable machine ever devised by the wit of man. It could talk and it could vote or refuse certain additional taxes : but the bulk of the income of the country came from the hereditary revenue which was independent of the vote of Parliament, and which, honestly collected and administered, would render the executive—nominated in England —independent of additional votes. It could pass resolutions but it had no authority subject to its orders to carry them out. No number of votes of censure in Parliament could shake the position of the Viceroy and his Chief Secretary, who held their offices under the Great Seal of England. It could pass Bills, now that Poynings' Law was gone, without previously submitting them in turn to the Irish and to the English Privy Council. But they only became statutes, as we have said, when they came under the Great Seal of England, and that Seal could only be applied by the English King on the advice of his English Councillors.

No doubt with 100,000 armed Volunteers at its back the House could govern the country, but who would answer for the Volunteers? All history should have told Grattan, as Fox had to remind him, that Government by "Prætorian Bands" and Government by free discussion could not exist

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

together. And it was the Volunteers, instigated thereto by Flood, who gave Grattan his first bad fall before many months were out. With the Volunteers in existence the Irish Parliament was in constant danger: without the Volunteers it was powerless, for it was representative neither of the nation at large, nor even of the Colony whom it regarded as the nation, and whose interests it so jealously guarded. And this unsubstantial stage picture—representative only of the minority of a minority—was the “august presence” before which Grattan bowed, and which he hailed as the Palladium of a nation’s liberties!

As for the overwhelming and unrepresented Roman Catholic majority, there is no evidence that, outside of Dublin at least, they took much interest in the matter. They were to be “emancipated” some day, they were told by Grattan, but no one seemed quite sure what emancipation meant or when it would come. If it meant political power, Flood was “inflexibly opposed” to it, whilst as for Lucas, his immediate predecessor in the “National” leadership, he had been, as Mr. Lecky tells us, “virulently and aggressively anti-Catholic.” Charlemont—a sanguine man—thought that after “a century at least” of the best education “our semi-barbarians” might be brought “to assimilate with their fellow subjects, and to a capacity of duly performing the functions of a citizen.” The Earl Bishop of Derry, Charlemont’s rival for the leadership of the Volunteers, saw it is true, no objection to the toleration of “the exercise of that silly but harmless religion”; and at the end he advocated a pretty far-reaching scheme of emancipation, but not many of his followers would go so far, and his introduction of the subject at the great

## "OUR SEMI-BARBARIANS"

Volunteer Convention had much to do with the break-up of that body. In any case his erratic and unstable mind had at no time any real influence on the Irish Parliament.

As for Grattan himself, he took refuge under a cloud of words, and it is difficult to reconcile his views as expressed at different periods of his career. Like the Bishop and others in those free-thinking days he seems to have thought that "philosophy" would settle the difficulty. What Luther had done for Protestants, "philosophy," he said on one occasion, was doing for the Roman Catholics. Under "philosophy" and toleration they would all become free-thinkers, and so the question would settle itself. This was his view in the year of Independence when he spoke on one of the Relief Bills of that period. Indulgence to Catholics, he said, could never injure the Protestant religion. "That religion is the religion of the State, and will become the religion of Catholics if severity does not prevent them. Bigotry may survive persecution, but it cannot survive toleration."

But whatever form "relief," or "indulgence," or "emancipation," might take it was a cardinal point that the Roman Catholic Irishman must always, as we have seen, be subject to the "ascendancy" which Grattan represented. Ten years after Independence he held firmly to this article in his political creed: "I love the Roman Catholic," he wrote in 1792. "I am a friend of his liberty, but it is only in as much as his liberty is entirely consistent with your ascendancy, and an addition to the strength and freedom of the Protestant community. These being my principles, and the Protestant interest my first object, you may judge that I shall never assent to any measure tending

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to shake the security of property in this kingdom, or to subvert the Protestant ascendancy.” Grattan, it is true, repeatedly supported the Catholic claims, and after the Union became their champion in the English Parliament ; but in view of such declarations of unalterable opinion and policy it is not to be wondered at that Wolfe Tone summed up this popular champion by saying, “Grattan dreads the people as much as Monk Mason.”

And if Grattan’s Parliament was thus equally powerless and inefficient as regards England on the one hand and the bulk of the Irish people on the other, how did it stand as regards the Volunteers —the Frankenstein monster that overshadowed it almost to the last ? As we have seen, Grattan insisted on two points in his great Independence orations. He declared that freedom being won for all time, the volunteer organisations would “specifically and majestically close their great work” by abolishing themselves. And he declared that it would be “foolish” and “dishonourable” to insist on further renunciation and humiliation on the part of England. As for the first, the Volunteers, as we have seen, lost no time in declaring that they had no intention of disappearing from the scene to please the House of Commons. They were, on the contrary, determined to be more “majestic” than ever ; and the first point they chose to enforce was precisely that which Grattan had told them that it would be “foolish” and “dishonourable” for them to insist upon.

Grattan at first got full credit for his achievement from the Ulster volunteers, who were the backbone of the whole movement. After the “*Esto Perpetua*” speech in April, the Belfast Volunteer company met on parade, and adopted an address

## THE RENUNCIATION ACT

to "the deliverer of his country," in which they celebrated their emancipation from "the intolerable yoke of a foreign legislature," but at the same time, oddly enough, rejoiced at the approach of an era when, with "grievances fully redressed," "Britain and Ireland, though distinct kingdoms, will become one people, inseparably united by interest and affection, by equal liberty and the same constitution." And on June 4 following, the King's birthday was celebrated "with every possible demonstration of heartfelt joy." The volunteers on horse and on foot paraded, fully accoutred, on the slopes of the Cave Hill and drank to "the patriot King of a free people"; to Charlemont: to Grattan: to the Dungannon Delegates: to the Protestant Interest: to the "Glorious Memory of King William": to a speedy and cordial reconciliation between Great Britain and North America: and to a score of other things. After which they marched back to town "manceuvring and firing all the way."

Flood's course was, as usual, tortuous. At first his friends made an attempt to get back for him the Privy Councillorship and the Vice-Treasurer-ship which he had forfeited. The Right Honourable Gentleman, said his mouthpiece in the House, "was above receiving an alms from his country." This remark was, of course, to the address of Grattan, but it also conveyed the hint that Flood was again open to offers of Government employment. Portland was willing to give him the Privy Councillorship, but the Vice-Chancellorship was not vacant. In any case the Viceroy knew Flood by this time: "His ambition," he wrote, "is so immeasurable that no dependence can be placed upon any engagement he may be induced to form."

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

All at once the ever-disappointed one blazed out into a flame of the purest patriotism. England had repealed the Declaratory Act, but what Parliament could do Parliament might undo. What was wanted was just what Grattan had repudiated as foolish and dishonourable—an express Act of the English Parliament renouncing for all time the right to legislate for Ireland, and a similar Declaratory Act of the Irish Parliament. A less astute Parliamentarian than Flood might have seen that his own argument applied with equal effect to his new proposal, and that the English Parliament could repeal a Renunciatory Act as easily as a Declaratory Act. You may pile words upon words, but no Parliament can bind its successor or make one Act of Parliament more sacred than another. But Flood was not talking to the House of Commons in which, for the moment, he had lost all character and influence. He was talking to the Volunteers outside, upon whom he reckoned to provide supporters in the next Parliament. Leave was asked to introduce in the Irish Parliament a Bill declaring the sole and exclusive right of the Irish Parliament to make laws in all cases whatever external and internal in the Kingdom of Ireland. Flood supported it, but leave was unanimously refused on the ground that such a measure was superfluous and unnecessary.

Flood, however, had succeeded in alarming the Volunteers. The Lawyers' Corps drew up a resolution supporting his contention, and declaring that in their opinion no real security had been obtained until the British Legislature had in express terms acknowledged its incapacity to legislate for Ireland. And the Belfast volunteers, who in April had addressed Grattan as the Deliverer of his

## "COLONEL" FLOOD

Country, evidently had their doubts on the subject in June, for on the 27th of that month—just a month after Grattan's speech—they drew up two addresses; one to "Colonel" Grattan and the other to "Colonel" Flood. The address to Grattan was complimentary, indeed, but reserved. "Doubts having been entertained," it says, "which are in our opinion well founded, whether the mere repeal of the 6th of George I. is in itself a sufficient renunciation of the power formerly exercised over this kingdom, we apprehend it would tend to general satisfaction," &c. &c.—if Grattan would kindly eat his own words. And Grattan is coldly contemptuous in his reply: "I am sorry to differ from you: I conceive your doubt to be ill founded. With great respect for your opinions, and unalterable attachment to your interests, I adhere to the latter, I am, &c. &c."

In the case of "Colonel" Flood both address and reply are composed in a very different strain. "Your unequalled abilities, your unrivalled eloquence, your knowledge which seems bounded only by the limits which the author of our nature has prescribed for the greatest of our kind, and the sacrifices you have made to serve your country, oblige us to look up to you as one of the first of men"—with this modest exordium they proceed to assure the Colonel that they quite agree with him and exhort him to go on and save their suffering kingdom—which, by the way, they were quite sure had been saved by Grattan two months before. Flood in return entirely agrees with them, and declares that his "humble efforts" are wholly at their service. A few days later they elect the Colonel a full private in the Belfast First Volunteer Corps, humbly explaining that they were thereby

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

acquiring merit and not conferring honour, since they could not confer honours on one who was "loaded with the admiration of the world."

What would have happened if the Rockingham Ministry had remained in power it is difficult to imagine. Flood, for all his fine words, was not the man to run any risks, and unless he meant business his exchange of compliments with the bellicose Belfast volunteers would not have done him much good with the Parliament in College Green. But at this moment Rockingham died, Portland ceased to be Lord-Lieutenant and everything was at sixes and sevens again. Shelburne became Prime Minister, with a very precarious tenure of office, and Ireland was handed over to Earl Temple, whose correspondence in September opens with an expression of his profound disrelish of the task of governing a country where, as he plainly put it, "no Government exists." The country was in the hands, not of Parliament, but of "a body of armed men, composed chiefly of the middling and lower orders, influenced by no one and leading those who affect to guide them."

Temple was nearer to the truth here than perhaps he knew, for there is on record a wonderful resolution of this time passed by the indignant Belfast battalion and running thus: "From various recent instances in this country it appears expedient now to declare that it is totally subversive of the spirit of Volunteer Associations that officers should, in any case regarding political measures, pretend to determine for their corps or in any manner prevent or obstruct their free deliberations. Resolved, therefore, unanimously—that as no part of this battalion ever has been, so it never shall be bound, in such cases, by any act which has not

## THE VOLUNTEERS AND POLITICS

first been proposed to, deliberated on, and approved by the privates of the several companies, or by the whole body in its collective capacity." Regiments turned into debating societies in which the Colonel has an equal voice with the private are not unknown in the early stages of revolutions, but such proceedings do not conduce either to military or to political efficiency, and it is evident that these corps, if they were not to become a danger—or a laughing-stock—required a stronger leader than Charlemont. Temple, who fancied himself as an intriguer, tried to use Charlemont as a weapon against Flood, and so "to foment that spirit of disunion amongst the Volunteers upon which alone I found my hopes of forming a Government." One thing was certain. "It is my unalterable opinion that the concession (to the demands of Flood) is but the beginning of a scene which will close for ever the account between the two kingdoms." And in six weeks this profound young statesman was equally firmly convinced that England's only safety lay in immediate surrender to Flood. The Renunciation Act must be passed at once—"I am only alarmed at the delay."

With such wisdom was Ireland governed at this most serious crisis of her history. "The one chance," Temple had been explaining to Shelburne, "of securing the authority of the Government" lay in the Irish Parliament. Grattan was still strong there, and would undertake to carry the House with him if the Government would strongly back him up. "Nothing but a Parliament," he reiterated, "can recover the Government and be opposed to the Volunteers." And having made this quite clear he proceeded to throw over Grattan

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

and the Parliament, and surrender to Flood and the Volunteers. His excuse was a decision of Lord Mansfield's in an Irish case which had been on the list for trial in the King's Bench before the repeal of the Declaratory Act. When it came up Mansfield heard and decided it. We do not see that he could have done anything else. The case was before him : no objection seems to have been made by either party. It was not the duty of the judge to inquire into an Act which could hardly be held to oust his jurisdiction in cases then pending. At any rate, to treat a judicial act as a deliberate breach of faith on the part of the British Government seems absurd. But Flood and his friends set up a lamentable outcry, and Temple promptly collapsed. And so a measure of Renunciation—which the Irish House of Commons itself had in June unanimously refused to consider as being superfluous and unnecessary, was, with equal unanimity passed in January in the English Parliament, and hailed as a national triumph.

With such a victory over Parliament to their credit the Volunteers were soon ready for a further move in advance. So far from being satisfied with Grattan's Parliament, the delegates of thirty-eight corps met in Belfast in June to demand Parliamentary Reform and an Irish Bill of Rights, and a second Ulster Volunteer Convention was summoned to meet at Dungannon in September. Meanwhile the Shelburne Ministry had fallen ; the Fox-North Coalition had been formed, and once more Ireland was treated to a fresh set of Governors. Worst of all the change took place when the country was on the verge of a General Election. The first wave of enthusiasm had spent its force, trade and agriculture were again depressed, and the old

## THE “FENCIBLES”

Parliamentary practitioners began to send in their little bills and to demand those “gratifications” which made public life pleasant—indeed possible—for the majority of them. Grattan’s Parliament and the achievement of Independence had not made the slightest difference in this respect. The Government had a fair working majority : Grattan, himself, counselled moderation and unity : but the old “professionals” were grumbling audibly, whilst Flood had secured a noisy and unscrupulous following, inside the House and out of it, who were determined to make all the trouble they could.

Lord Northington, the new Viceroy, who came over thinking to find calm sailing was soon in troubled waters. Elections were expensive things—more so than ever since the Octennial Act and the Declaration of Independence, and the Government must find the money to see its own supporters through. “I am met,” wrote the Viceroy to Lord North in July, “with pretensions and claims of various natures which I would gladly have had more time to consider, to arrange the interests, satisfy the expectations, and acquire the strength which Government ought to have at the opening of a new Parliament.” Portland, the new Premier, however, whom we have seen as Viceroy, knew Ireland and realised the danger arising from the presence of an irresponsible armed force dominating and intimidating Parliament and the Executive. Already attempts had been made by the Government to form “fencible” regiments which would take the place of the Volunteers, and so carry out Grattan’s idea of the gradual dissolution of that formidable organisation. The Volunteers received this news with an angry outcry. Belfast joined with Galway and Cork in protesting against the

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

attempt to replace an independent body by "mercenaries," and the Belfast company at one of its gatherings drank, with enthusiasm, the toast : " May the fencibles and their friends never enjoy the benefits of freemen : May Ireland never want hemp to exalt all fencible commanders who deserve it."

A Belfast town meeting, duly convened by public notice, and held in the Town House, had gone further, for in a resolution evidently aimed at Grattan it had declared the proposal an insult, and an "infamous job, calculated to reward the supple tools of administration at the expense of the nation they had laboured to deceive." In fomenting this agitation Flood seems to have gone beyond the wishes of Charlemont, for the above violent resolution was met by a protest to which the names of Charlemont's most prominent supporters were appended. Grattan, Flood, and Charlemont, in fact, were now all pulling in different directions, and the result did not tend to orderly government, or to the repute of the new Parliament upon which the hopes of so many, both in England and in Ireland, were set.

The second Dungannon Convention was held in September 1783, the new Parliament being due to meet in October. Grattan held aloof, and if Charlemont attended it was rather to keep the more violent spirits in check than from any great belief in the usefulness of such a gathering. The resolutions were vague and declamatory : freedom, they declared, was their "indefeasible right," "derived from the author of their being." Those only are free who are "governed by no laws but those to which they assent," was another dictum. And there was one in which they anticipated

## FOX ON “IRISH JOBS”

the decrees of the Jacobin Club a few years later : The elective franchise shall extend “to those, and those only who will exercise it for the public good.” Roman Catholics, needless to say, were not included in those who could “exercise the franchise for the public good.” Some of the bolder spirits moved an amendment in favour of the Catholics, but it was defeated, and Charlemont, in his autobiography, notes this attempt as “the first appearance of that unaccountable frenzy which afterwards became so dangerously epidemical.” The dominant note of the second Convention was a democratic House of Commons on an exclusively Protestant basis. And the Belfast town meeting, called to ratify the resolutions of “the volunteer army of Ulster, assembled at Dungannon,” expressly approved their wisdom in “avoiding the consideration of a multiplicity of objects”—in other words in refusing to entertain the proposal for the extension of the franchise to the Catholics, and resolved further that if the House of Commons should “refuse to express the public will,” it would be “the duty of a community of freemen not only to reason but to ACT.”

Northington at first remained inactive, but Fox who did not forget his humiliation over the Renunciation Bill, and who—when in office—was capable of taking a statesmanlike view of such a situation, was thoroughly alarmed and called for decisive action. “If the Volunteers are treated as they ought to be,” he wrote to Northington in November, “I look to their dissolution as a certain and not very distant event : if otherwise, I reckon their government, or rather anarchy, as firmly established as such a thing is capable of being. If you ask me what I mean by *firmness*, I have no scruple

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

in saying I mean it in the strictest sense. . . . This sounds violent, but I am clear I am right." And he goes on to argue, as a Secretary of State can so easily do when at a comfortable distance from the seat of danger—as his new colleague North had done at the time of the American troubles—that the concessions made in the Duke of Portland's time had been accepted as final: that the account must be regarded as closed, and must never again be opened on any pretext whatever. They could not go on for ever surrendering for the sake of pleasing Ireland. Irishmen, next to a job for themselves, loved nothing so well as a job for their country and so forth. Fox, who had handled the proceeds of a very substantial "Irish Job" for himself over the sinecure clerkship of the Pells,\* not long before, may be accepted as an authority on the subject.

And to General Burgoyne, who no doubt had represented the difficulty of his situation as commander-in-chief, in face of the overwhelming numerical superiority of the volunteers, Fox wrote a few days later: "If either the Parliamentary reform, in any shape, however modified, or any other point claimed by the Bishop of Derry and his Volunteers be conceded, Ireland is irretrievably lost for ever. The question is not whether this or that measure shall take place, but whether the constitution of Ireland which Irish patriots are so proud of having established shall exist, or whether the Government shall be as purely military as ever it was under the praetorian bands." He relied on Burgoyne and the army to act when called on. "If the Volunteers are baffled they must, in the nature of things, dissolve or bring it

\* See p. 99.

## THE “PRÆTORIAN BANDS”

to an immediate crisis—on the event of which . . . I do not believe you can entertain a serious apprehension.”

Less than eighteen months of “ freedom restored ” and the millennium proclaimed, and it had already come to this ! In May 1782, Fox could assure the House of Commons that the period of suspicion and misunderstanding was at an end, and that “ the intestine divisions of Ireland were no more.” In November 1783, the new House of Commons, Grattan’s first Parliament, finds itself menaced by outside force, and Fox, as Secretary of State, is writing to the English commander-in-chief in Ireland that “ the Constitution which the Irish patriots are so proud of having established ” was in danger from Irish hands, and that he must be in readiness to act with firmness in the strictest sense if the “ prætorian bands ” were not to bring about a revolution.

Such was the situation. The new Parliament was to meet in October, and in order to show that the people could act as well as reason, the Dungannon meeting had resolved that a National Convention of the volunteer army of Ireland should be held in Dublin simultaneously with the sitting of Parliament. The crisis dreaded by Fox seemed therefore to be near at hand. If the free Constitution secured by Grattan was to exist, a firm stand must be made against the military menace of the Volunteers. And by way of rising to the situation the House, on the motion of the Government, at once proceeded to pass a vote of thanks to the Volunteers !

With such a House, and such an Executive, anything was possible. What really mattered, so far as Parliament was concerned, was to see whether

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

Grattan was still master as against the intrigues of Flood. Burgoyne, and not the Parliament, was recognised by the party of anarchy as the real obstacle to a revolution. The war was now over, and there were in Ireland 12,000 regular troops and more were being added as the force was still below the legal peace establishment. Flood's first attempt was to secure a reduction of this force, so as to leave the field clear for the Volunteers. He pretended a zeal for economy which, as Grattan reminded him, had not characterised him while in office. Grattan had hitherto displayed great forbearance, for so long as the Government acted fairly and kept their bargain he felt bound to support them. Flood, losing all restraint, retorted on Grattan as a "mendicant patriot," who had sold his country. "Give me leave to say," he concluded, "if this gentleman enters into this kind of colloquy he will not have much to boast of at the end of the session."

The scene that ensued has already been described.\* Flood was utterly crushed in the House, but he still had a following outside. His faithful and eloquent Belfast company of volunteers deplored the "illiberal attack" made upon him, and sent him an address of which one paragraph ran: "Persevere, sir! Continue to exert your unequalled abilities in fixing the internal constitution of this kingdom on a permanent solid foundation. The voice of the people is your support, and the voice of the people must be attended to. It is the purity of the Constitution that gives our country the preference to another, and marks the genius of the inhabitants in a most distinguishing manner. We hope the period is drawing nigh

\* See p. 105.

## THE EARL BISHOP

when the senate will speak the wishes of the people, and when our liberty shall be complete."

Flood's acknowledgment of all this oratory was a spiritless production, and seems at this distance of time to echo the voice of a broken man. The National Convention was to meet on November 10, and already the Parliamentarians were plucking up heart. On the appointed day General Burgoyne had a strong body of seasoned troops judiciously distributed, and although Northington could not find courage to obey Fox's advice and prohibit the Convention altogether, it was known that there were those at hand who would not hesitate to act as the occasion required. And if the Convention was weak, as regards a comparison of outside forces, it was even weaker from inside. Its members were hopelessly divided on the Catholic question, and whilst some of the Northern Corps were in full march for Republicanism and revolution on the American pattern, a good many sensible men were growing very tired of the rhodomontade of the political resolutions and were quietly resuming their businesses, which they had too long neglected. Charlemont was only persuaded to attend in order to avert mischief, and Flood turned up with one of those mysterious illnesses which always attacked him when there was danger in the air.

The only person who appears to have thoroughly enjoyed himself throughout, was the eccentric Earl Bishop of Derry, who now makes a meteoric dash across the field of Irish politics. As already mentioned the Earl of Bristol had in 1766 remained Viceroy long enough to make his graceless younger brother an Irish bishop. He shortly after succeeded to the earldom, and it may be admitted

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

that he did as little credit to the coronet as to the mitre. Fox called the Bishop "a madman and a dishonest one," which is over summary for so protean a character; whilst Charlemont who knew him intimately, described him as "a bad father, a worse husband, a determined deist, very blasphemous in his conversation, and greatly addicted to intrigue and gallantry." But these were both men who had quarrelled with him, not without just cause. In fact it is impossible for an ordinary pen to do justice to such a subject, and if it had been Swift's allotted punishment in another sphere to be condemned to follow the course of Irish politics he must have bitterly regretted that even his morbid genius had never conceived the creation on Hounslow Heath of so grotesque a bishop as the Earl of Bristol.

He had warm friends: no Hervey was without friends: "Call a dog Hervey and I will love him," said Johnson, and the phrase stands for much. He was at one time, at any rate, beloved in Derry for his charity and his tolerance, and it was in reply to an address from the Derry Presbytery that he uttered his famous indictment of the Irish Parliament: "I do own to you, the very rock which founds my cathedral is less immovable than my purpose to liberate this high-mettled nation from the petulant and rapacious oligarchy which plunder and insult it." Jeremy Bentham judged him "pleasant, intelligent, well-bred and liberal minded to the last degree," and John Wesley found him, in his cathedral in 1775, preaching a "judicious, useful sermon," and "celebrating the Lord's Supper with admirable solemnity." After further acquaintance Wesley could describe him as "entirely easy and unaffected in his whole behaviour,

## "BLOOD, MY LORD"

exemplary in all parts of public worship, and plenteous in good works."

Whatever he was at his best, it is clear that the Bishop's "natural eccentricity" had at this period "passed the border line of sanity," as Mr. Litton Falkiner, the most sympathetic of his biographers, puts it. No consideration of prudence or of opportunity restrained him. "We shall have blood, my Lord : we shall have blood," he exclaimed cheerfully, on visiting Charlemont on the eve of the Convention. Grattan, Flood, or Charlemont might have their reservations, but he had none. At other times an enlightened Imperialist, all religions, all races, were for the moment the same to him. The "epidemic madness" was in the air, and all the extravagant phrasemongering of the early French Revolution can be found in the oratory of the Irish extremists many years earlier. Anacharsis Clootz would have been at home in the first Belfast company of volunteers, and the "Jeu de Paume" was but an echo of the Rotunda. Only, as happens in Ireland, the "Jeu de Paume" meant what it said, and the Rotunda did not.

The opening of this wonderful National Convention of the Armies of Ireland was a great day for Dublin. Even more extraordinary than the Earl Bishop of Derry, was his Irish nephew, George Robert Fitzgerald, a thorough-paced ruffian, who was hanged three years later at Castlebar, for one of the least of his many crimes. It was Fitzgerald evidently who had charge of the out-of-door performance, and who arranged for the bishop's triumphal passage through the streets, which was only a preliminary to his intended election as President of the Convention, and ultimate Dictator of Ireland.

No one can equal Mr. Froude in visualising this

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

kind of display, and his description of the Earl-Bishop's appearance on that 10th of November has been often quoted : "When the day came the whole city was out ; the footways lined with armed volunteers, the windows crowded with spectators. Thither (to the Rotunda at the head of Sackville Street) were streaming the deputies in uniform, the streets all ablaze with scarlet and green and gold and azure. Grenadier corps marched first, with Irish battle-axes and muskets slung across their shoulders. Behind the grenadiers came the delegates, two and two in uniform, each wearing a green scarf. In the rear came Napper Tandy with the Dublin artillery ; the guns dressed out in ribands, each with a scroll about his muzzle, saying in conspicuous letters : 'Open thou our mouths, O Lord, and our lips shall show forth Thy praise.'

"The Bishop himself entered Dublin with the state and manner of a monarch, as if he expected to be chosen King of Ireland. He sate in an open landau, drawn by six horses, magnificently apparelled in purple, with white gloves, gold fringed and gold tassels dangling from them, and buckles of diamonds on knee and shoe. His own mounted servants in gorgeous liveries attended on either side of his carriage. George Robert rode in front with a squadron of dragoons in gold and scarlet uniforms on the finest horses which could be bought in the land. A second squadron brought up the rear in equal splendour, and thus with slow and regal pace, the procession passing on, volunteers falling in with bands playing and colours flying : the crowd shouting, 'Long life to the Bishop,' the Bishop bowing to the crowd.

"Passing through College Green the Right Reverend Earl paused at the door of the Parliament

## THE BISHOP AS DICTATOR

House. The dragoons halted. The trumpets were blown. The Lords and Commons who had just finished prayers came out to pay their respects and gaze on the extraordinary scene. The Bishop saluted, the Bishop's guard presented arms, the band struck up the volunteer's march, and having thus, as he supposed, produced a proper impression, the august being waved his hand. The horses again moved ; the cavalcade swept on amid screams and shouts, past King William's statue, over the river and up the broad line of Sackville Street. As the carriage approached the Rotunda the artillery opened, and between the guns pealed wild hurrahs : the delegates were entering the hall. The Bishop passed in after them to show himself, scattered condescending smiles and patronising words of encouragement, and then retiring—to give them an opportunity of electing him, as he expected, to the Chair—drove to his house with the same state, to entertain the leading members of the assembly at a magnificent dinner."

Both Mr. Froude and Mr. Lecky seem to think that the Bishop intended to push matters to a deliberate revolution in the winter of 1783, and if we were dealing with an ordinarily sane being, the conclusion would be irresistible that he meant to use the National Convention in order to upset the House of Commons, and to have himself appointed Dictator. Flood, some will have it, was also in the plot, and many of the Ulster corps would have supported them, as would also George Robert Fitzgerald and his dragoons and Napper Tandy and his artillery. But, for one thing, it was too late. The revolutionaries, who—let it always be kept in mind—were not Nationalists in the modern racial or religious sense, but advocates

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

of Colonial Independence for the Protestant colony, could have done much in 1779 or 1780 when the whole structure of English Government in Ireland collapsed, and the island was without a regular army. Even in 1782 if Grattan had been a rebel, which he never was, the colony might have made a fight for it. But since 1782 peace had been definitely made with America, France, Spain, and Holland, and regiment after regiment of seasoned troops was returning to Ireland. In November 1783, Burgoyne was master of the situation. The Catholics were quiescent, and only in Dublin and in part of Ulster was there the remotest possibility of a republican rising.

The Volunteers, as we have seen, were divided amongst themselves. Grattan had thrown them over. Charlemont attended only in order to keep the Bishop out of the Chair, and many of the delegates consented to attend for a somewhat similar reason—to keep the hot-heads at home. Charlemont's words on this point are clear and precise : “Though I never cordially approved of the meeting, I did not choose to exert myself against it, especially as there was cause to fear my exertions would be fruitless : and if so might prevent my being useful towards moderating and guiding those measures which I could not with efficiency oppose, and directing that torrent which might otherwise have swept down all before it. I had, upon mature consideration, determined that to render the assembly as respectable as possible was the next best mode to the entire prevention of it.” The weak and vainglorious Northington in his despatches takes much of the credit of breaking up the Convention, but the dissolving causes were already there.

## THE VOLUNTEER CONVENTION

Perhaps the egregious Sir Boyle Roche deserves as much credit for the failure of the Convention as anybody, for at a critical moment when the Catholic claims were being pressed hard by the Bishop and his friends, he rose and declared that he was commissioned by Lord Kenmare, the head of the Catholic party, to say that the Catholics did not ask for any such change at present. The Extremists were thrown into confusion, and the proposal was defeated. When there was time to communicate with Kerry, Lord Kenmare denied the whole story, whereupon Roche got up and admitted that he had deliberately lied. Nothing better shows the farcical nature of the proceedings at this stage than the fact that Roche's manœuvre was not seriously resented or punished. A committee, proposed by the Bishop, and consisting of one representative from each county, was appointed to draw up a Reform Bill, but Flood was appointed assessor and he and Charlemont were employed in thwarting all proposals to include the Catholics. It was not till November 29 that the Bill was ready for presentation to the House of Commons, and then it was seen that in the new Ireland of the Volunteers the franchise was to be confined to Protestant freeholders and leaseholders. It was decided that Flood and all the other members of Parliament present should pass direct from the National Convention to the House to present the Bill, the Convention sitting "in permanence" till the result was known.

But the situation was saved. Burgoyne and his guns were within reach, and the House of Commons, conscious of support from outside, was, on November 29, a very different body from that which had voted obsequious thanks to the

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

volunteers on October 14. Barry Yelverton, who was now Attorney-General, felt himself strong enough to take the only proper and self-respecting course—to refuse even to look at a Bill imposed on the House by threats of armed force. The House and Galleries were again crowded as they had never been since the great day of Grattan's Declaration of Independence in the previous year. Grattan to whom the applause of the Dublin mob and of Volunteer Conventions had been as the breath of his nostrils, was vacillating and chagrined in face of his utter loss of popularity with those arbiters of Irish public opinion. Four weeks before he had crossed swords with Flood, and had won an easy victory over him upon the questions of personal character and political record. But he could not yet screw up his courage openly to defy the volunteers. He had refused to have anything to do with their National Convention, and it is said\* that in consequence his life was in danger from George Robert Fitzgerald and his hired bullies. But now he missed his opportunity and allowed others to come to the front to defend his own work—the Parliamentary Constitution of 1782.

Next to Grattan, Barry Yelverton, who had led the two successive attacks on Poynings' Law, had most to do with framing that Constitution, and now, while the galleries were yelling encouragement to Flood, and members looked at each other in apprehension as to what might happen, Yelverton stepped into the breach. He was a giant in debate, even in a House that contained such men as Flood and Grattan, Hely Hutchinson, and Hussey Burgh. He moved that the House should not consider the Bill. He too had admired and applauded the

\* Froude, "English in Ireland," ii. p. 420.

## BARRY YELVERTON

Volunteers, but “when the Volunteers form themselves into a debating society, and with the rude instrument, the bayonet, probe and explore the Constitution, my respect for them is destroyed.” They had won their independence of an alien assembly in London, and they did not sit there to register the edicts of another assembly, presented at the point of the bayonet. They had secured a free Constitution ; but before they had for a single session entered on the enjoyment of it, armed men, courting the smiles of the multitude, came to them and wished like children to throw away the bauble for which, with the eagerness of infantine caprice, they had struggled. “I say to the Volunteers,” he concluded, “you shall not throw away from you the blessings which you possess. . . . Beat your swords into ploughshares. Return to your occupations. Leave legislation in those hands in which the laws have placed it. . . . Our preservation depends on the vote we shall now give.”

Flood raged fiercely, and denounced those place-hunting officials, amongst whom he had so contentedly sat at meat for so many years. He saw that once more his stroke had missed, and his power was gone, and he blustered vaguely to the effect that “if the conduct of the House that night should create dissatisfaction in the Volunteers, that body and Parliament might be ‘committed’ against each other, and the public peace might be disturbed.” Fitzgibbon, who was on the threshold of well-earned promotion, now came forward and, as Northington reported to Fox, “acquitted himself astonishingly.” He struck at the beginnings of the political action of the volunteer movement—at the Belfast resolutions and the Dungannon meetings. He criticised the proposals of the Bill,

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

but it was not because it was replete with absurdities that he opposed it. He opposed it, and here he turned to Flood, who had come down in his full regimentals, "because it comes to us under the mandate of a military congress." He caught at Flood's word "commit" and retorted. "Gentlemen say it is dangerous to 'commit' the Parliament and the Volunteers. I know it is dangerous. I know the man that does it should answer for the crime with his head. But I know that the force of the law is sufficient to crush them to atoms, and for one, I say, I do not think life worth having at the will of an armed demagogue."

It was now three in the morning, and the scene in such a House may be imagined. On a division leave was refused by a majority of more than two to one. Barry Yelverton promptly followed this victory up by a resolution that the House would maintain its just rights and privileges against all encroachments. Now was the time for the Volunteers to act if they meant business, but it was soon apparent that most of them were, like their noble Chairman, only anxious to get quietly out of a position that had become ridiculous. Napper Tandy and his guns, George Robert Fitzgerald and his dragoons, dare not face Burgoyne and his veterans. And all Ireland knew it. Once that was admitted all that was left to the Volunteers was to take Yelverton's advice and "return to their occupations." They sat for two days more, and Flood and the Bishop talked eloquently, but nobody heeded them. In the north, where some of the leaders were in earnest and meant to follow the example of America, the movement still lingered and even burst into significance again on the news of the French Revolution. But the orderly politi-

## GENERAL BURGOYNE WINS

cians retired and left the revolutionaries to do their worst. What had been the “armed property” of the nation was to become, in Grattan’s phrase, its “armed beggary,” and the end was not far off.

The Belfast Companies met and declared “the necessity of preserving the military spirit in its fullest vigour by frequent reviews.” They resolved that “aristocracy” and “venality” “must sink before such a virtuous phalanx,” and even if they went down “they would testify that ‘our lives had had some smack of honour in them,’ and those who enslave them would have a tough bout of it contending with men who postpone life to liberty.” The Bill of Rights Battalion presented the Bishop with an address, and in his reply he told them that they were “far more numerous than their oppressors,” and that they should “no longer crouch under the iron rod.” Charlemont too still clung with “desperate fidelity” to the Ulster Volunteers, and commanded at the annual reviews of steadily dwindling numbers in Belfast. But he was now entirely out of touch with the guiding spirits in the northern capital. In July 1784, a town meeting had resolved “that the gradual extension of suffrage to our too long oppressed brethren, the Roman Catholics, preserving unimpaired the Protestant Government of this country, would be a measure fraught with the happiest consequences.” Grattan would have gone as far as that, but Flood would not, and Charlemont set his face against it like a flint. “I have given it every consideration in my power,” he replied, “and am sorry to say that my decision essentially differs from yours.”

In this attitude Charlemont and Flood faithfully reflected the majority even of those who regarded

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

themselves as advanced patriots in the Irish Parliament. The majority at the National Convention, according to Northington, were “much alarmed” by the Roman Catholics claiming the right to vote, and no one was more surprised than themselves when, ten years later, the Irish Parliament found itself, owing to the persistent pressure of Pitt and Dundas, accepting the Enfranchisement Bill of 1793. Mr. Lecky is, no doubt, right when he represents the ideal of the reformers in Grattan’s Parliament as being “a democracy planted in an aristocracy, popular institutions growing out of an intelligent and ascendant class ; and the memory of ancient Athens, with its democracy of 30,000 free citizens rising above a vast population of unrepresented slaves was probably present to many minds.”

And so ends the first stage of Grattan’s Parliament. It had just escaped destruction : but it had gained no credit, and Grattan himself had cut an unheroic figure at the critical moment. It had been saved from destruction by British bayonets, not by the virtues of its members—who, indeed, were in the main only the old brigade unchanged and unimproved. Two new figures, however, now begin to stand out from the crowd.

John Foster, who had entered the House in Townshend’s time was now to receive the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, which had for twenty years been a sinecure in the hands of Single-Speech Hamilton, and was to make it memorable by his high protection Corn Law—which, says Mr. Lecky, “changed the face of the land and made Ireland to a great extent an arable instead of a pasture country”—and by his support of Pitt’s Commercial Propositions. He was one of the clearest-headed

## FOSTER AND FITZGIBBON

men of business of his day—a determined Ascendency man and opponent of reform—and, when the time came, an equally determined opponent of the Union.

Another great figure which had begun to attract attention was that of John Fitzgibbon,\* who as Attorney-General was now to become leader of the Government forces in the House of Commons, and the dominant power in Irish politics till the Union. During his few years in Parliament Fitzgibbon had given a general support to the popular party, and was at first on friendly terms with Grattan, to whom he was destined to be bitterly opposed during the greater part of his official career. Like Foster he was warmly attached to the Irish Parliament, and like Foster he distrusted reform, although he accepted, and seems honestly to have attempted to work with the unworkable Constitution of 1782. But he always insisted—and this is the key to his whole attitude—that a reformed and democratic Parliament was incompatible with Protestant ascendancy and with the Irish Constitution. Flood and Grattan and Charlemont, as we have seen, thought that they could go a certain length in the direction of reform and then stop. Fitzgibbon always insisted that this was impossible. “The only security for your liberty,” he was never tired of assuring the landed interest—which was the only one that counted in those days, “is your connection with Great Britain, and gentlemen who risk breaking the connection must make up their minds to a Union. God forbid that I should ever see that day! But if ever the day on which a

\* In the case of Fitzgibbon, as in that of the Earl of Bristol, Bishop of Derry, the completest and most trustworthy account and estimate of life and character will be found in Mr. Litton Falkiner’s “Studies in Irish History.”

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

separation shall be attempted may come, I shall not hesitate to embrace a Union rather than a separation."

Fitzgibbon's arrogant temper and vitriolic tongue made him many enemies, whom he never attempted to conciliate, and his public character on the whole is not a pleasant one. He was reckless in his assertions, and like Johnson, if his pistol missed fire he knocked down his opponent with the butt. He was, however, courageous and far-seeing, and if love of power was his infirmity it was never tinged by meaner motives. The fall of the coalition and the Premiership of Pitt gave him his opportunity, and under a succession of Viceroys and Chief Secretaries he now becomes in a sense the real ruler of Ireland.

## CHAPTER VII

### PITT AND REFORM IN IRELAND

RELIEVED, thanks to General Burgoyne and his troops, of the imminent danger of destruction by prætorian bands Grattan's Parliament was in 1784 at liberty to turn to its normal work. In spite of its obviously unworkable character as an engine of Government, every one except a handful of revolutionary extremists who still followed the Bishop of Derry, seems to have accepted the situation and endeavoured to make the best of it. Pitt was now in power—destined to enjoy the longest Premiership since that of Sir Robert Walpole—and like Walpole his ambition was to be a peace Minister, and in addition to carry out his father's ideas of parliamentary reform and Adam Smith's ideas of financial and commercial liberation. Very different was his fate, but for the moment the horizon was unclouded. On January 11 the Duke of Rutland was appointed Lord Lieutenant, and Rutland's correspondence with Pitt and others, which is very complete and candid, throws unusual light on the progress of events in Ireland. Rutland was instructed to keep a sharp eye on the Bishop and his revolutionary antics, but, otherwise, he seems to have been left at first very much to his own devices.

Grattan, tamed by the dangers and risks disclosed in the working of his Independent Parliament, was still behaving admirably, and Rutland was able

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

to write in March that there was every prospect of “a quiet and well-supported administration.” Orde, the new Chief Secretary, was, it is true, writing at the same time, that he was “almost distracted with the infinite numbers and variety of applicants for favour who had all long stories to tell,” but that was the usual thing in the Irish Parliament after 1782 as before it, and satisfaction of some kind was found for the most urgent. Flood again brought in the Reform Bill of the Volunteer Convention, and was again decisively defeated. Rutland sent a special messenger north to watch the Bishop at this crisis, but then and after it was doubted whether he would venture further than “talking treason over his claret.” The Duke of Leinster was quiet but wanted a better office than that of Postmaster which had been offered him ; Lord Shannon was firm in support of the Government ; Mr. Ponsonby, as usual, was “ready to unite his strength in support of the Government” provided his terms were acceded to, whilst the views of Mr. Loftus “extended to a peerage.”

The Dublin mob had not yet recovered from the spacious days of the National Convention. Times were bad and free trade was no longer the panacea. The artisans demanded protection against British manufactures, and when a Bill to this end was rejected, largely by the influence of Foster, the mob surged down to College Green to insist on their rights. The Lord Mayor was cowardly and incompetent ; the House was stormed, the unpopular members howled at, and a demand made that Foster should be handed over to them with a rope round his neck. The Viceroy ordered out the troops, dispersed the rioters, committed the ringleaders to Newgate, and issued a proclamation offering a

## A DUBLIN RIOT

reward for the instigators not yet in custody. This had an excellent effect and strengthened the House in its support of the Government. But the condition of the country was far from satisfactory, for in the same letter in which he gives this account of the Dublin riot to Lord Sydney, Rutland states that he had on that day received an account of an insurrection of the Whiteboys, "who have long been dormant," in the County of Kilkenny.

All this reads somewhat oddly in view of the generally accepted story that the days of Grattan's Parliament were halcyon days in Ireland, when peace and prosperity prevailed and every man sat happily under his own vine and fig-tree. As a matter of fact, both industrial and agricultural troubles seem to have been particularly frequent at this period. "Coercion Acts" had to be passed at the rate of two and three per session—the sessions had become annual now—and the House was confronted with petitions from all quarters for the relief of distress. It was stated in Parliament that in three manufacturing parishes of Dublin alone there were twenty-one thousand in want. As usual it is difficult to get at the exact truth. Foster's Corn Law encouraged tillage, and rents again rose rapidly, but if the people were so happy one is inclined to ask why Whiteboyism should break out again after ten or twelve years' respite.

The Duke of Rutland, who like Townshend, took a real interest in the condition of the people, was anything but happy about the state of affairs, and at an early stage of his Viceroyalty we find him arranging for a tour of the country so that he could see matters with his own eyes. First of all, however, he was anxious to abate in some way the Volunteer

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

menace. He wrote in his first year of office that the existence of order or good Government in the country "will not admit of a body of troops independent of and unconnected with the State, being any longer tolerated." When the matter was brought forward in the House, "Mr. Daly and Mr. Grattan, in speeches perhaps the finest and most decisive ever delivered within the walls of the Irish Parliament, paved the way to the adoption of those measures which I have proposed to you in respect to the volunteer army. Their opinions went strongly to its suppression."\* The Government were at this time engaged on "the establishment of a militia composed of Protestants alone," and of this also Grattan highly approved. The Volunteers, he argued, had no right whatever to be displeased at the establishment of a militia; the dictates of armed men ought to be disregarded by Parliament. "That great and honourable body of men, the primitive Volunteers, deserved much of their country, but I am free to say that they who now assume the name have much degenerated. . . . There is a cankered part of the dregs of the people that has now been armed. Let no gentleman give such men countenance, or pretend to join them with the original Volunteers."

The Bishop of Derry was still the centre of mischief in the north. "He has turned his son out of his house for a Tory," says Rutland to Pitt, "and a party of officers lately dined with him when his whole language was such complete treason that they were reduced to the alternative of flinging a bottle at his head or of quitting his company, the latter of which they preferred. If he continues in this country to act as he has hitherto

\* Rutland to Pitt, January 23, 1785.

## THE LAST OF THE BISHOP

done it will be impossible to avoid impeaching him next session." But the Bishop was by this time nearly tired of his patriotic whim. Before the end of the year he set out for Italy and Ireland knew him no more. The last view we get of him in the Rutland correspondence is highly characteristic. Hamilton writes to the Duke\* that an Oxford correspondent of his "was caught by a sudden exclamation from one countryman to another, 'Why sure, Thomas, that there man cannot be a parson in them there clothes.' The gentleman turned his head and saw no other than the Bishop of Derry in a light lilac coat and his volunteer hat fiercely cocked, laced, and with a cockade. He was on his way to the Continent."

In one of his official letters† the Duke sums up the situation in Ireland very clearly. "The (opposition) parties in this country consist of three descriptions of men: the Dissenters, who seek for such an alteration of the constitution as will throw more power into their hands by bringing the Government nearer to that of a Republic; the Roman Catholics, whose superior numbers would speedily give them the upper hand if they were admitted to a participation in the legislature; and those who oppose the Government upon personal considerations. The two first classes are naturally jealous of each other from principle, and the third class is not upon any principle a friend to either. . . . Quiet is now pretty well restored, but I am satisfied that neither the Dissenters nor the Roman Catholics have abandoned their favourite wishes. If they entertain hopes of success a time of war will be the season chosen

\* S. Hamilton to Rutland, November 6, 1785.

† Rutland to Sydney, January 11, 1785.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

to urge their designs and such a time of embarrassment will be laid hold of by a watchful enemy to harass the country and increase the distractions of Great Britain."

Europe was now within a very few years of the outbreak of the French Revolution, and so little do sovereigns and statesmen know what is in store for them that the information supplied by Government agents of this time and religiously forwarded to headquarters was that Ireland was full of emissaries from France, that Napper Tandy and his braves "drink to the French King on their knees" and that their object was to establish the Roman Catholic religion. As Napper Tandy and his circle were Protestants or free-thinkers as well as Republicans the story seems rather far-fetched. When the French did come they were certainly not much troubled about religion of any sort. "Why, God help these simpletons," said a French officer who landed with General Humbert's force in 1798, "if they knew how little we care for the Pope and his religion, they would not be so hot in expecting help from us. We have just turned Mr. Pope out of Italy, and who knows but we may find him again in this country?"

It was not the French but the Whiteboys who were the real trouble. In the autumn of 1785 the Viceroy was on a visit to Munster, and parts of Cork were represented to him as being in a deplorable state. The Whiteboys had "possessed themselves of the fastnesses and strongholds of Muskerry and had destroyed cattle and committed some murders"; they committed "every sort of cruelty and depredations." And in the County of Limerick where some soldiers had been imprudent enough to interfere with a band of smugglers,

## THE END OF “GEORGE ROBERT”

the sergeant and eight men were wounded and the whole body obliged to retreat. “It is one of the blessings of volunteering,” continues the Viceroy, “that the whole country, Papist and Protestant indiscriminately, are possessed of arms which they employ to the most criminal and illegal purposes.” In January 1786 he reported that “the Whiteboys continue to assemble in Munster, and from the County of Roscommon I hear that one, Roderick O’Connor, known as the King of Connaught, has assembled banditti of four or five hundred armed men.” In a later letter, however, the Viceroy admits that the Roscommon outbreak had been exaggerated, and that O’Connor had “some plea of title to the lands of which he possessed himself.”

And here George Robert Fitzgerald turns up unexpectedly again. We last saw him heading his bodyguard of dragoons at the National Convention. He now, February 1786, has at length over-stepped even the limits of Connaught toleration, and the law is closing in round him. “George Robert Fitzgerald, the nephew of the Earl of Bristol, whose conduct has long branded him as a pest to society, a violator of the laws, and an enemy of all Government, has at length committed a murder of the most atrocious nature. The evidence, I understand, is very strong and will be brought home to him, so that it is now more than probable that he will no longer escape those laws he has lived only to violate and insult.” But George Robert made a hard fight for it. He shammed sickness and had his trial postponed, although the redoubtable Attorney-General Fitz-Gibbon was himself at Castlebar to prosecute. In June, however, Fitzgibbon secured his conviction with that of six of his accomplices. Like

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

most bullies, he played the coward at the last ; " all his resolution forsook him and he exhibited a picture of the most unmanly terror and the wildest despair that could be possibly beheld. He implored a suspension of his punishment from five minutes to five minutes till he delayed his execution for two hours."\* We have no record of how the Bishop received the news of the unheroic end of his patriotic aide-de-camp.

It was the Whiteboy outrages that brought Grattan for the last time into cordial relations with the Government and with Fitzgibbon. In 1787 Fitzgibbon introduced a drastic Coercion Act, under which the administration of illegal oaths was punishable with imprisonment for life ; and the seizure of arms, the levying of contributions by force, and intimidation and other Whiteboy practices were made capital offences. The necessity for such a measure, writes the Chief Secretary on this occasion, " was universally admitted, and Mr. Grattan in particular very strongly urged the principle as essential to the prosperity of the country. He and Mr. Brownlow were tellers for the majority." On Grattan's advice one very irritating clause was withdrawn, but he still approved of the firmest possible government in the hopes of making his Independent Constitution a success. But he was growing discontented with his situation. Like O'Connell in the following century he had been so long accustomed to the applause of the crowd that he could not live without it, and in three short years we find him again exchanging compliments with the Belfast Republican clubs and advocating fundamental changes in his own Parliament. There was certainly ample room for reform, but Grattan's Parlia-

\* Rutland to Sydney, June 1786.

## THE FALL OF FOX

ment wanted a free hand for its own practices, and it did not want reform. Grattan soon realised that the cause was not over-popular on College Green and his influence continued to decline.

But before we come to Grattan's final break with Fitzgibbon and the Government we must go back a little and consider Pitt's heroic attempts at reform, Parliamentary and commercial. Fox had fallen so low through the Coalition with North and the India Bill, that, when the General Election swept away the bulk of his followers—"Fox's Martyrs" they were called—his return to power had grown hopeless. In power we have seen him display firmness and statesmanship on Irish affairs. In opposition he was now to show how far faction and jealousy can sink a great man. "I will make my harvest from Ireland," he said, in a speech that was reported to the Viceroy, and from this time on we find him using Ireland simply as a weapon to thwart and embarrass Pitt and the British Government at home and abroad. Even the followers of Flood seem to have been disgusted at the sudden change. "I am sorry to find by your letter," writes one of Newenham's correspondents,\* "that Mr. Fox is becoming popular in Ireland. You must indeed be very changeable if you can give your confidence to a man whom you so lately execrated, and whom you are convinced is not your friend. . . . Keep within the pale of the Constitution at all events." [There was talk in Ireland of a refusal to pay taxes.] "If

\* W. A. Miles to Sir E. Newenham, June 16, 1784. Hist. MSS. Commission, Rutland Papers, vol. iii. p. 108. (Letters were at this time being opened in the post office, and this is how Newenham's correspondence comes to be among the Viceroy's papers.)

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

you set such an example of disobedience how can you expect obedience from the rabble you are arming and who are already too refractory and too prone to violate the laws of their country ? I assure you that the very instant you commence hostilities you will be overwhelmed with French troops, and that the object of the war will very soon become a contest among yourselves for property."

Grattan himself had, in the old bad days, invoked England's difficulties as Ireland's opportunity. "Ireland," he wrote in April 1780, "must continue in a state of armed preparation dreading the approach of a general peace, and attributing all she holds dear to the calamitous condition of the British interest in every quarter of the globe." And in August 1785, when the turbulent fit was on him again, he uses Fox's very phrase, "The American War was the Irish harvest." But it is a dangerous weapon, and the ascendancy in Ireland was to find that it may be resorted to once too often. "Dual Government," as a modern statesman has said, "is a vulture gnawing at the vitals of the Empire." The vulture may enjoy it for a time, but some day when the torture and the menace have become unbearable, the Empire may decide that it is time to put an end to it once for all. Pitt for some time unquestionably favoured the acceptance of Grattan's Independent Irish Parliament as an irrevocable fact, and was prepared to make the best of it. But at that time Grattan was doing his best to co-operate and make things work smoothly. When, in the interests of an English faction, he used the Irish Parliament as an instrument of obstruction and menace to English interests, Pitt was simply driven by force of circumstances

## PITT AND RUTLAND

to become the foremost advocate of an incorporating Union of the two Parliaments.

Reform of the Irish Parliament and an absolute freedom of trade for Ireland with all British ports and possessions was—as befits a disciple of Adam Smith—the simple basis of Pitt's Irish policy. In the first he was baffled by the nature of the case ; in the second, with all its untold possibilities of blessing to Ireland, he was baffled by one of the meanest and most unscrupulous of recorded political intrigues. In rejecting Pitt's Commercial Propositions in 1785, says Lord Morley,\* “ The factious course pursued by the English Opposition was only less detestable than the folly of the Anglo-Irish leaders.”

The charm of the Pitt-Rutland correspondence, as distinguished from all the other piles of forgotten letters through which the student of this period has to wade, lies in its genuineness and the spirit of sympathy and liking between two young men who when the correspondence opens were still in their twenties. Pitt had already made an attempt at Parliamentary Reform in England, and, without going so far as the Radical Duke of Richmond, who wanted universal suffrage and annual Parliaments, he was undoubtedly a sincere and convinced advocate of the clearing away of the “ rotten parts of the Constitution ”—a phrase of his father's to which we owe the opprobrious epithet familiar to a later generation. Pitt was, as Wilberforce tells us, “ terribly disappointed and beat ” when his first proposals failed. In June 1784 Reform for England was again introduced but rejected in the House of Commons by 199 to 125, Pitt himself, although Prime Minister, voting in the minority

\* “ Edmund Burke : an Historical Study,” by John Morley.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

with Fox and the Opposition. "Lord North," Orde tells the Viceroy,\* "made one of his very best speeches," and Burke, "after five fruitless efforts to gain the permission of the House to be heard, broke away in a violent passion and did not return to vote at all." It appears that the great orator, whom every one must read but whom few cared to listen to, had spoken for five hours on the previous day, and the House was determined not to risk a repetition of the infliction.

As the year went on, Pitt began to urge his desire for an Irish Reform Bill, and the consequent chagrin and annoyance of the Viceroy's advisers in Dublin becomes very apparent. Rutland had been bombarded with the usual applications for jobs and pensions of every sort, and his opinion of the methods of the Irish Parliament is summed up in a vehement memorandum†: "Here everything is a job and abused; with a few exceptions, from the highest to the lowest, the whole people are a selfish, interested, savage race of harpies and plunderers."

It was on October 7, 1784, that Pitt formally pressed the subject on Rutland. He wanted the Viceroy to ascertain "the temper of the people" on the question of reform: "I see how great the difficulty of your situation must be in this respect, because it must have naturally happened that the persons with whom you have necessarily most habits of intercourse must be those who have most interest against any plan of reform; that is to say, who have the greatest share of present parliamentary interest. What I venture to suggest for your consideration is whether it be possible

\* Orde to Rutland, June 17, 1784.

† Hist. MSS., XIVth Report, intro., p. 9.

## AN IRISH REFORM BILL

for you to gain any authentic knowledge (without committing yourself), of the extent of the numbers who are really zealous for reform and of the ideas that would content them. By all I hear accidentally the Protestant reformers are alarmed at the pretensions of the Catholics, and for that very reason would stop very short of the extreme speculative notions of universal suffrage. Could there be any way of your confidentially sounding Lord Charlemont on the subject without any danger from the consequences ? I am sure you will forgive me the anxiety that impels me to trouble you with all these suggestions.”

It would be difficult for the most suspicious of mortals to suggest artifice or duplicity in such a letter. “I am aware,” the young Prime Minister goes on in a tone almost of entreaty, “that you may have seen local difficulties which may discourage you in this whole subject of reform” [Rutland’s last letter had been crammed with discouragements] “and make you doubt the possibility of applying our principles to Ireland ; but let me beseech you to recollect that both your character and mine for consistency are at stake, unless there are unanswerable proofs that the case of Ireland and England is different.”

Rutland’s reply, marked “Secret and confidential,” shows that he was entirely converted to the views of his Dublin advisers—those “most interested against any plan of reform.” And, indeed, it is difficult even a century and a quarter after the event to see what answer there was to the Viceroy’s objections. The Belfast Republicans might imagine an Ireland in which there was universal suffrage for the chosen few, whose virtues, in their own opinion, showed them to be worthy of

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

it ; even those, like Grattan, who went further and advocated the suffrage for Roman Catholics, " while preserving unimpaired the Protestant Government of this country," might think they had some workable plan, but an English statesman might well have his doubts. In a United Parliament the existence even of a strong Catholic minority presented no essential difficulty ; but to maintain the ascendancy of a minority in Ireland on a representative Parliamentary basis was an obvious absurdity. Either force or corruption must come in to redress the balance. And at that time, be it remembered, all parties in England and all the Parliamentary parties in Ireland, were agreed on the paramount necessity of maintaining the " Protestant interest."

" Every point of view in which it presents itself," wrote Rutland on November 14, " only opens new scenes of difficulty and danger, and in short leaves me but one opinion, that Government cannot embark in the measure without the risk of absolute ruin. . . . How can you, upon principle, increase the right of voting to some without extending the rule ? If you admit the Catholics' vote, your next Parliament will be composed of Papists ; and should your reform only go to increase the number of Protestant voters to the exclusion of Catholics I am convinced the latter would run into rebellion."

Pitt's appeal to Rutland's " character for consistency," and his reference to " our " principles had put the Viceroy on his mettle, and he answered vigorously. " Your character, your credit, your consistency cannot be impeached by avoiding to make an option of these difficulties, for . . . the local circumstances of the two countries place them on such different premises that you cannot put them together in an argument. In short, it

## THE RADICAL DUKE

would, in my opinion, be little less than lunacy for Government here to involve itself with a question of so dangerous a tendency." And then comes a final suggestion, which certainly is not that of the hot-blooded young viceroy, but rather the advice of some wily veteran, who had been watching the struggles in the Irish Parliament before either Pitt or Rutland was born. "Let Government look quietly on, and by poising the balance gain strength by the dispute; let us not from a principle of extravagant knight-errantry create a dilemma where the choice can only be as to the mode of producing confusion and not the substance."

The Chief Secretary, duly primed by Beresford and Foster, renewed the attack on Pitt's Reform scheme when in London a fortnight later. "I am assured from indisputable authority," writes Orde to Rutland, "that the Duke of Richmond is the cause of the still lingering reluctance to abandon the views of reformation in Ireland. Very many circumstances however conspire, I think, to persuade Mr. Pitt of the impracticability of such a measure and of the impolicy it would be in Government to be volunteers in it." Pitt's next letter to Rutland, however, shows no signs of "lingering reluctance." "Parliamentary reform, I am still sure," he writes on December 4, "after considering all you have stated, *must* sooner or later be carried *in both countries*. If it is well done the sooner the better. For God's sake do not persuade yourself in the meantime that the measure if properly managed and separated from every ingredient of faction, which I believe it may be, is inconsistent with either the dignity or the tranquillity and facility of Government. On the contrary, I believe they ultimately depend upon it. And, if such a settlement is

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

practicable, it is the only system worth the hazard and trouble which belongs to every system that can be thought of."

The rest of the story can be quickly told. Orde saw Pitt two days later.\* "I find him," he writes, "exceedingly distressed in regard to Ireland in that respect, but at the same time very fair and open, and full of handsome acknowledgments of your Grace's kindness and consideration in writing him so explicitly your decisive sentiments." And again, "The Duke of Richmond torments Mr. P. about this unfortunate point of reform, which will, I see, be a serious matter here. But at all events the extension should not be thought of to Ireland till the question shall be decided here. Mr. P. argues fairly about it, as he does about everything; but he is sadly involved and embarrassed. The Opposition, I know, found their hopes upon no other ground."

In April 1785 the English Bill was thrown out and that decided the fate of Pitt's reform scheme for both countries. With the exception of Dundas Pitt seems to have had no real supporters in his ideas of Parliamentary reform. "In dining above-stairs," writes the garrulous Daniel Pulteney, "I had frequent opportunities to hear opinions, and there the generality of Pitt's friends only lamented that he would not keep himself clear of this absurd business."

The Commercial Propositions were a more serious affair, but happily they have been explained and discussed at such length by so many writers that a brief account will serve for present purposes. All are now agreed as to the stupidity and the impolicy of the commercial and trading restrictions imposed

\* Orde to Rutland, December 6, 1784.

## THE COLONIAL POLICY

by Great Britain on Ireland and on the colonies in the eighteenth century. Politicians tell us that the Irish restrictions were evidences of the fiendish malignity of England and of her desire to degrade and impoverish Ireland. Those who believe that sort of thing will, of course, continue to believe it, but those who know anything of the commercial history of the period and of the "Colonial policy," invented by the wisdom of Spain and of Portugal, and applied by their followers and imitators, have a much simpler explanation of these trading and manufacturing restrictions.

All countries possessed with Colonies in those days were governed by the spirit of "monopolies," against which Adam Smith reasoned with such overwhelming success. A Colony was regarded solely from the point of view of what were imagined to be the interests of the Mother Country. The Colony was to grow produce which the Mother Country required for consumption, for manufacture or for trade, and if the Colony attempted to do anything else it was promptly prevented. The British "plantations" in Ireland were treated as selfishly and as foolishly as the British plantations elsewhere. The woollen industry was an English industry and so Ireland must not be allowed to compete, but out of their great bounty various statesmen undertook to promote and subsidise the linen industry, at that time thriving throughout the east and south of Ireland and spreading into Ulster also. Shipping in the same way was encouraged or checked just as suited certain English ports. The interests of the native races in Ireland in all this were not, it may be admitted, considered at all. The English, like the Spaniards, the Dutch or the French, invaded or annexed new

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

territories for what they could get out of them, and troubled little about the feelings of the natives.

As the Irish Colonies grew stronger, and as this or that interest had to be conciliated, concessions had to be made, grudgingly and with much opposition from those whose trade was, or was thought to be, in danger. Pulteney, whose remarks are often full of shrewd humour, writes in this connection to the Viceroy at a time when the Commercial Propositions were on and when the English manufacturers were in full cry. "Your Grace," he says, "remembers probably a remark of Sir Robert Walpole which Pitt has already seen enough to allow the truth of, that a Minister might shear the country gentleman when he would and the landed interest would always produce him a rich fleece in silence: but that the trading interest resembled a hog, whom if you attempted to touch, though you was only to pluck a bristle, he would certainly cry out loud enough to alarm all the neighbourhood."

Pitt who was an out and out disciple of Adam Smith, had no doubts at all about the remedy for Ireland's industrial and commercial troubles. Absolute freedom of exchange of Irish produce with England, and all the English colonies and possessions, was his programme. And as the British fleet had won and defended those Colonies, it was only fair that out of the realised increase of revenue arising from such increased trade, Ireland should make a proportionate contribution to Imperial revenue. Ireland could not lose, for if there were no increase there would be no contribution. Lord North's concessions in 1780 had been liberal, but there had been a spirit of bargaining, and either Parliament retained the right

## THE COMMERCIAL PROPOSITIONS

to revise the bargain. Pitt was the first to propose the simple expedient of perpetual and unqualified free trade in which Dublin, Cork and Belfast would participate on the same terms as London or Liverpool or Bristol, and that not as a matter of give and take but because it was a thing right and good in itself as between cities of the same Empire.

But there were those in the Irish Parliament who could manufacture objections to anything if their own factious interests could thereby be served. Flood and some others had for some time been fomenting a non-importation movement directed against English and Scotch goods, and their ambition was to establish a system of high protection that would exclude such goods altogether. When Orde had made his statement recommending Pitt's free-trade proposals they were on the whole well received in the Irish House. Flood, in order to gain time, put up a Mr. Brownlow, one of his pack, who delivered a whirling and intemperate attack on things in general. The well-worn *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes* was of course dragged in. He was, he said, hardly able to restrain his indignation at hearing a Minister propose to make Ireland a tributary nation to Great Britain. It was well for Mr. Orde that this was a country remarkable for humanity else he would not have lived to carry back an answer to his master. If the gifts of Britain were to be accompanied with the slavery of Ireland he would hurl back her gifts with scorn. Under cover of this tipsy rhodomontade Flood endeavoured to secure the adjournment of the House in order to work up feeling out of doors, but the House was disgusted rather than excited, and the adjournment was rejected.

Pitt in his letters makes his central point clear

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

to all who care for clearness. "The fundamental principle," he wrote to Rutland,\* "and the only one on which the whole plan can be justified, is that I mentioned in the beginning of my letter—that for the future the two countries will be to the most essential purposes united. On this ground the wealth and prosperity of the whole is the object, from what local sources they arise is indifferent. We trust to various circumstances in believing that no branch of trade or manufacture will shift so suddenly as not to allow time, in every instance as it arises, for the industry of this country gradually to take another direction: and confident that there will be markets sufficient to exercise the industry of both countries to whatever pitch either can carry it, we are not afraid in this liberal view to encourage a competition which will ultimately prove for the common benefit of the Empire, by giving to each country the possession of whatever branch of trade or article of manufacture it is best adapted to. These are the ideas I entertain of what we give to Ireland and of the principles on which it is given."

As regards Ireland's contribution Pitt had been equally clear: "The unavoidable consequence of these principles brings me back to that which I set out with—the indispensable necessity of some fixed mode of contribution on the part of Ireland, in proportion to her growing means, to the general defence. That in fact she ought to contribute in that proportion I have never heard any man question as a principle. . . . The fund which seems the best and indeed the only one that has been pointed out for this purpose is the hereditary revenue. Such a fund, from the nature of the articles of which it is

\* Pitt to Rutland, January 6, 1785.

## PITT AND IRELAND

composed, must have a direct relation to the wealth, the commerce, and the population of Ireland. . . . In Ireland it cannot escape consideration that this is not a contribution given beforehand for uncertain expectations, but one which can only follow the actual possession and enjoyment of the benefits in return for which it is given. If Ireland does not by this scheme grow richer and more populous she will contribute nothing. If she does grow richer by the participation of our trade, surely she ought to contribute, and the measure of that contribution cannot, with equal justice, be fixed in any other proportion."

We must quote also the conclusion of this remarkable letter—a document in which Pitt's whole nature, his earlier unspoilt nature, shines forth. There were, he held, two relations possible between England and Ireland : "The one, that which is exploded, of total subordination in Ireland, and of restrictions on her commerce for the benefit of this country, which was by this simple means enabled to bear the whole burden of the Empire. The other is what is now proposed to be confirmed and completed, that of an equal participation of all commercial advantages and some proportion of the charge of protecting the general interest. If Ireland is at all connected with this country, and is to remain a member of the Empire, she must make her option between these two principles. . . . You will, I am sure, forgive my wearying you with so much detail. I release you from it in the persuasion that you will feel how much depends upon this crisis for both countries, and in the certainty that your exertions and those of your friends will be proportioned to its importance. By address and dexterity in the management of this business, and above all by firmness and a reso-

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

lution to succeed, I have no doubt that it will be found both possible and easy. I shall then have to congratulate you on your having the happiness to accomplish a scheme which may lay the foundation of lasting tranquillity and reviving prosperity to both countries."

Grattan in the main approved: it would, indeed, have been difficult for him, till jealous promptings had poisoned his mind, to do anything else in the case of propositions which were so much wider and more generous than anything he could have dared to hope for. He objected, not unfairly, as did also Foster, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to the indefinite nature of Ireland's contribution. Ultimately a somewhat complicated alternative scheme was agreed on, to the effect that when the hereditary revenue rose above £656,000—Townshend, it will be recollect, had said that with proper management it ought to reach £800,000—"in each year of peace wherein the annual revenue shall equal the annual expense, and in each year of war without regard to such equality," the surplus above that figure should be appropriated towards the naval force of the Empire "in such manner as the Parliament of this kingdom shall direct." And in this form the propositions were accepted by the Irish Parliament, Grattan throwing out the observation that the plan was "open, fair, and just, and such as the British Minister can justify to both nations."

But Fox had resolved to "make his harvest from Ireland," and now was the time to sow discord between the two countries. Pitt introduced the Irish resolutions in the House of Commons on February 22, 1785. Fox and North—once more we find the ill-omened alliance—immediately took up the high patriotic ground, and declared that such

## THE TREACHERY OF FOX

favour as was shown to Ireland would be ruinous to English commerce. The commercial classes—who did not read Adam Smith, and who were always ready “to make an outcry like a shorn hog,” as Rutland had already warned Pitt\*—were not slow to take the hint. On March 22 Pulteney wrote to the Viceroy : “I am sorry to acquaint your Grace that the selfishness, ignorance, and credulity of many more commercial towns has been too successfully practised on by Opposition, and the tide is at present running in many considerable places against the whole of the Irish proposals. The people of Nottingham, under the influence of Portland emissaries, petitioned yesterday, which makes the twenty-sixth, I think.” As Mr. Lecky sums it up : “Petitions poured in from every important manufacturing city in England and Scotland. Liverpool led the way ; a petition from Lancashire bearing 80,000 signatures was laid on the floor of the House, and in a short time no less than sixty-two other petitions were presented. They alleged that the low taxes and the low price of labour in Ireland would make anything like free trade ruinous to English manufactures ; that the English trader would be driven not only out of the Irish, but even out of his own market ; that the English manufacturer would be driven in self-defence to transfer his works and capital to Ireland ; and they clamorously demanded to be heard by counsel against the scheme.”

Even Pitt’s tenacity and self-confidence could not make an effectual stand against this clamour, organised as it was with all the unscrupulous skill and parliamentary address of Fox. He was “making his harvest.” Pitt had to give way here and there

\* Hist. MSS. Commission, Rutland Papers, November 1784.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

to meet the uproar, and every concession to English interests was gleefully noted for future use against the Propositions in Ireland. The articles were recast and extended to twenty. "Every parliamentary trick," says Pulteney,\* was exhausted by Fox to delay and complicate matters. On May 24 he was an Irish patriot, and delivered "one of the most barefaced party speeches I ever heard," warning the Irish people that "the fourth resolution subjected them to their old dependency on the selfishness, caprices, &c., of this country." Two days later, on another resolution, "Fox took fresh ground again, and was an English patriot, moving to leave out the whole clause which was to secure Ireland an effectual preference over every other country." And so the dirty game went on. Everything was done that could cause agitation in England or suspicion and irritation in Ireland. Towards the end of May the amended propositions passed the English House of Commons.

Fox had calculated well. When the amended fourth proposition reached Ireland it "filled the minds of all descriptions of persons with consternation and jealousy, and has left our cause"—it is Rutland † writing to Pitt—"almost destitute of an advocate." Rutland at once arranged to see Grattan in order to avert mischief, if possible; but the Irish leader was now very different from the placable, practical Grattan of only a few months before. He found him "impracticable in a degree scarcely credible." Grattan, of course, knew every move in the game, and knew the motives and the methods of

\* Hist. MSS. Commission, Rutland Correspondence, May 24 and 26, 1785.

† Hist. MSS. Commission, Rutland Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 215.

## A "DETESTABLE" POLICY

his friends, Fox and Sheridan. He even went back on his original ground, and declared that "the eleven specific propositions as they went from Ireland" (and which he had publicly eulogised as "open, fair, and just to both countries") were "perfectly inadmissible." "In short," says Rutland, "he appears to have adopted a decided line of opposition, and has returned to his vomit and to the support of the desperate views of an English abandoned faction in Ireland."

When the propositions came before the Irish House, carefully altered for that very purpose by Fox, North, Burke, and Sheridan, Grattan and Flood, in eager rivalry for a bad pre-eminence, raised the cry that Ireland had, as never before, been outraged, betrayed, and insulted. Grattan's speech, as Rutland describes it, was "a display of the most beautiful eloquence perhaps ever heard, but it was seditious and inflammatory to a degree hardly credible." Flood was not to be left behind by Grattan. The whole affair, he declared, was a most infamous attack on Irish independence. They declined to become the register of another assembly (a good phrase, which he had last heard in that House when Barry Yelverton had extinguished him and his National Convention with it in 1783). "I will raise my voice," he screamed, "I will be heard in the extremity of the land. I say if you give leave to bring in this Bill you are no longer a Parliament. Meet it boldly and not like dastards fearful to guard your rights, though you talk bravely to your wives and children, trembling at a foreign nation."

In spite of this factitious indignation, the Bill passed its first reading by a narrow majority, but Orde and Rutland soon saw that it was hopeless to

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

press a scheme which had now been made equally unpopular in Ireland and in England. The Commercial Propositions were withdrawn. Fox had reaped his harvest, but he had sown the seed of another that was reaped in blood. Pitt, after some further correspondence, turned from the Irish Parliament and its politics with disgust. When, fourteen years later, he turned to it again it was to end it.

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We have already referred to the measured judgment passed on this phase of Irish history by one who, as historian and statesman, has had much to do with Irish questions. The views of Lord Morley, as the admirer and expounder of Burke,\* may bear further quotation : "Pitt, fresh from Adam Smith, brought forward in 1785 his famous Commercial Propositions, of which the theory was that Irish trade should be free, that Ireland should be admitted to a permanent participation in commercial advantages, whilst in return for this she should, after her hereditary revenue passed a certain point, devote the surplus to purposes such as the maintenance of the Navy, in which both countries had an interest. Nothing could be more equitable, nothing more certain to prove beneficial to the mercantile interest of the sister island. Pitt was to be believed when he wrote that of all the objects of his political life this was in his opinion the most important that he had ever been engaged in : that he did not expect ever to meet another that should arouse every emotion in so strong a degree as this did.

"The factious course pursued by the English

\* "Edmund Burke: a Historical Study," by John Morley, p. 286ff.

## THE UNION INEVITABLE

Opposition was only less detestable than the folly of the Anglo-Irish leaders. Fox, who was ostentatiously ignorant of political economy, led the charge by insisting that Pitt's measures would annihilate English trade." [There was also Burke's suggestion that there was some analogy to the question of American taxation.] "Whatever stress we may lay on this for the sake of vindicating Burke from the charge of mere factiousness (a task which even then we cannot accomplish), we are still compelled to recognise his inferiority in statesmanship to the minister whom he opposed. . . . Burke maintained in a manner particularly likely to inflame his jealous countrymen that Irish interests must always be subordinate to English interests. Yet he lent himself to the party cry that Pitt was taking his first measures for the re-enslavement of Ireland. Had it not been for what he himself called the delirium of the preceding session, he would have seen that Pitt was, in truth, taking his first measures for the emancipation of Ireland from an unjust and oppressive subordination and for her installation as a corporate member of the Empire—the only position permanently possible for her.\* In 1779, when Burke had resisted selfish pressure and sacrificed his seat for Bristol, Irish affairs were happily not a branch of party politics. Six years later the tide ran higher and covered every inch of ground. The Opposition first inflamed English feeling. In order to conciliate this Pitt was forced to curtail the advantages which he had proffered the Irish traders. Then, with this curtailment for one of their weapons, the Opposition

\* On another page the writer points this remark by saying : "As Ireland awoke either independence or Union became inevitable."

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

inflamed Irish feeling as they had before done that of England. Fox declaimed shrilly against ‘bartering English Commerce for Irish Slavery.’ By the time the English had been brought round to the scheme the Irish had been thoroughly alienated from it. A substantial boon was sacrificed, amid bonfires and candles, to the phantom of Irish Legislative Independence. The result must have convinced Pitt more firmly than ever that his great master, Adam Smith, was right in predicting that nothing short of the Union of the two countries would deliver Ireland out of the hands of her fatuous chiefs and their too worthy followers.”

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RISING HOPE OF THE WHIGS

WHEN in July 1785, Rutland informed Pitt that Grattan had suddenly become "impracticable in a degree scarcely credible" and had repudiated as ruinous to Ireland propositions which in February he had declared to be "open, fair, and just to both countries," he announced the failure of the Independent Constitution of 1782. Grattan, as has been pointed out, had, for a few years after 1782, admirably played the part of a constitutional statesman. He did his best to make the Independent Constitution a successful working arrangement between the two countries. Along with Foster, he supported the Viceroy and his Ministers, and secured many valuable reforms for Ireland. But the spirit of faction was not to be allowed to lie dormant, and in this case the irritating cause came from England. After the fall of the Coalition, Fox and his friends were unable to realise the magnitude of the disaster that had befallen them. They laughed at the "schoolboy" Prime Minister. "This boyish prank," said one, when Pitt became Prime Minister, "will soon be over. . . . They have lost all character, and are considered as a set of children playing at Ministers, and must be sent back to school."

When they discovered that Pitt's Ministry was a very real thing and had received the overwhelming support of the country at a general election, their

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wrath and resentment knew no bounds, and it did not improve their temper to see that their reckless opposition only strengthened Pitt in the eyes of the English people. Their tactics on the Commercial Propositions were, as has been justly said, “detestable,” and marked perhaps the lowest depth to which faction had sunk even in a generation whose standard of political honour was not too high. Pitt remained Prime Minister in England through seventeen eventful years; it was Ireland that suffered when Grattan allowed himself to be made the tool of “an abandoned English faction.” With a friendly, sympathetic, patriotic leader the Irish Parliament might have been kept in touch with England and the approaching catastrophe averted. It was Grattan who constituted himself the architect of ruin by pointing out how the Constitution of 1782 might be made unworkable.

For a time, after the defeat of the Free Trade Propositions, Pitt tried to keep his heart up, and urged his friend Rutland to persevere. Peace and trade development were still his panacea for Ireland as for England. He had quite recovered lost ground in England, and the conclusion of the session, he wrote, had been “in all respects triumphant.” The Foxites, for lack of a better story, had been spreading reports of disunion in the Cabinet on the Irish question. “I can assure you on my honour,” he tells Rutland, “and it is a subject on which I would on no consideration leave you in the dark, that the reverse is the truth. Whatever room for discussion there may be in the modes to be adopted, in all substantial points and in the common cause of Government a more cordial co-operation never existed. The newspapers are equally filled with lies on the idea

## THE PRINCE AND THE WHIGS

of hostile appearances towards France. The state of politics on the Continent is delicate enough, but still, I believe, may be improved to our advantage without any hazard of our being involved. And let this business of Ireland terminate well, let peace continue for five years, and we shall again look any Power in Europe in the face. In what remains to be done in Ireland I have only to conjure you not to admit of expedients which sacrifice any part of the consistency, effect, or even appearance of the plan to the caprices or pretences of men who either object captiously and without intending to be satisfied, or who are afraid, for any object, to hazard momentary popularity."

But, in spite of optimism, Pitt's ideas of progressive reform and freedom of trade in Ireland were doomed. Ten days later he had to admit that in Ireland "the die seems in a great measure to be cast, at least for the present. . . . All I have to say in the meantime is very short. Let us meet what has happened, or whatever may happen, with the coolness and determination of persons who may be defeated but cannot be disgraced, and who know that those who obstruct them are greater sufferers than themselves. . . . When this fact has produced a little more wisdom in Ireland I believe the time will yet come when we shall see all our views realised in both countries and for the advantage of both. It may be sooner or later, as accident or perhaps for some time malice may direct, but it will be right at last." But on the same day Rutland \* was writing to Pitt that all was over; that "the arts which had been too successfully practised by a desperate and unprincipled faction have so besotted and disordered the under-

\* Rutland to Pitt, August 17, 1785.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

standings of the nation, and have so completely, for the present, destroyed their distinguishing faculty, that they are taught to call bitter sweet, and sweet bitter."

The hopes of the Whigs, beaten in the country and in Parliament, now turned to the Prince of Wales; they had found a still lower deep. Fox and Sheridan were the bosom friends and boon companions of the most worthless man that ever disgraced the nation in its high places. Already in 1765 the King had been reported as suffering from mental aberration. His intense anxieties during the prolonged series of political—or, rather, personal—crises that marked the years 1782–1784 had again shaken him in mind and body, and he talked of retiring to Hanover. His insanity or death came to be openly talked of, and Fox and his friends counted on the influence of the Prince of Wales for their rehabilitation. In 1784 we get a glimpse in one of Orde's letters to Rutland\* of the habits and customs of the rising hope of the Whigs. Orde says : “The conduct of the Prince of Wales is such as not only distresses the King, but also very much moves the discontent of the people, who do not suffer excesses of a certain magnitude to be acted even by the highest characters without some marks of indignation. The present complaint against his Royal Highness is that in the quadrille which he danced in honour of Mr. Fox's pretended victory he was so far overcome by the wine he had drank as to fall flat upon his face in the middle of his figure, and upon being raised from the floor”—[Here follow details which it is happily unnecessary to republish.] “Upon the whole it is certain that the cause will

\* Orde to Rutland, June 3, 1784. Hist. MSS. Commission, Rutland MSS., iii. 101.

## THE KING'S INSANITY

not be greatly honoured or benefited by this Royal countenance. Every exertion, however, of every sort is put in practice to delude or disturb the minds of the people, and it is seriously to be apprehended that the true junto, C. Fox, FitzP., Sheridan, &c., will be restrained by no consideration of the public safety in order to advance the mere possibility of their private and general success."

In 1788 the King's insanity declared itself, and all that was disreputable in politics promptly turned to the rising sun. Pitt had in the interval disentangled that "delicate" European situation to which he had alluded in his letter to Rutland, and had concluded a treaty of commerce with France. Fox, of course, objected, and "thundered against any connection or friendship with France." Not long afterwards France was at war with England, and then Fox's tactics were reversed. "The triumph of the French Government over the English," he wrote, "does, in fact, afford me a degree of pleasure which it is very difficult to disguise." But now France was friendly to England, and, still worse, to Pitt, and therefore Fox was implacably hostile to France. "Past experience," he said, "proved that whenever France saw this country weak and thought her incapable of effectually resisting, she seized the opportunity and aimed at effecting her long-desired destruction. If the Minister would look over the correspondence in the Foreign Office he would find the warmest assurances of friendship from France up to the very moment of breaking with us and joining America against us."\* In France, as in Ireland, Fox's one criterion of sympathy and alliance was hostility to England—so long, at least,

\* These extracts are taken from Lord Rosebery's "Pitt," at pp. 29 and 86.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

as Pitt was Prime Minister and he himself was out of office.

A Regency was necessary during the King's incapacity. Fox and his friends declared that the Prince of Wales became King *de facto* with full powers. As that interesting Prince's first act would be to turn out Pitt and to send for Fox, it was evident to the latter that the highest principles of constitutional law were concerned. Pitt laid down the obvious rule that on the best Whig principles the power in such cases lay in Parliament, and in Parliament alone. That the Prince of Wales should be Regent was hardly disputed, but Pitt insisted, especially as the doctors declared that the King's illness was only temporary, that it was the power and the duty of Parliament to select the Regent and to define and limit his powers. The constitutional principle seems clear enough, but Fox was desperately anxious to grasp at power on any terms and at any cost. He counted on being in office "in a fortnight," and the character of the Prince of Wales was a sufficient guarantee that if he were once declared Regent with unlimited powers, and if the King were in his custody, means would be found to perpetuate the Regency. Pitt, in order to prevent this, argued that the temporary exercise of Royal authority was a thing quite different from accession to the Throne, and contended that Parliament could confer such powers as were necessary for the temporary administration of the Crown, whilst leaving the custody of the King and the administration of the Royal household to the Queen.

As Lord Rosebery very aptly puts it: "Would it have been well for the Minister to hand over the King's household, his personal surroundings

## THE KING'S RECOVERY

and personal associates, to the caprice of the Prince of Wales, that his old servants might be sent about their business to make way for the pimps and the blacklegs, the Jack Paynes and the George Hangers, who formed the Prince's Court, so that the King's first returning rays of reason might rest upon the faces that he most detested—on the parasites and boon companions of his debauched son? Such a state of things might have renewed the disease of the Sovereign, and was, at any rate, wholly unsuited to a fleeting and temporary Regency."

Fox and the Prince had no luck. Pitt's constitutional contention was supported in both Houses by large majorities, and, after all, the Regency Bill was not required. The question solved itself by the King's complete recovery. As Lord Rosebery's vivid narrative says: "While the Regency Bill was passing, the King was recovering. Before it was out of committee in the Lords he was receiving his Ministers. The situation was almost ludicrous. A week later it would have been his duty to give his Royal dissent to the Regency Bill. The Ministry of Fox, already overdue some weeks, melted into space. English or Scottish rats like Aubrey or Queensberry cursed their evil star. The rats of Dublin Castle endeavoured to return, not wholly without success. . . . Pitt once more reigned supreme, and the Opposition had once more lapsed into outer darkness. For the Minister enjoyed at once the gratitude of the King, the enthusiasm of the masses, and the almost blind confidence of Parliament. It was his highest point of fortune and power, an elevation that no other Minister has attained."

Lord Rosebery's reference to "the rats in Dublin

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

Castle" brings us back to the recollection that there were some gentlemen in the Irish capital quite as anxious as Fox and Sheridan to reap their harvest under the sunshine of the Prince's smile.\* Grattan could on most occasions bear himself with a natural dignity; now he made himself ridiculous, and, in addition, afforded another illustration of the essential unworkableness of his Irish Constitution. Rutland's promising career had been cut off by death—a death undoubtedly accelerated by the standard of conviviality exacted of the tenants of Dublin Castle—and the Marquis of Buckingham (the Earl Temple of 1782) had come back to Dublin. The House of Commons had been getting out of hand more and more; the old oligarchy—Leinster, Shannon, Ponsonby, and the rest—again began to raise their price by opposition to the policy of the Administration.

Flood had now disappeared from Irish politics, and Grattan, the agent of Fox and Sheridan, had the field to himself. He had been in England in the autumn of 1788 and had formed his plan of campaign in concert with Fox. He returned to Dublin in January to revive in Ireland the discredited and defeated Whig scheme for handing over all power to the Prince, and Fitzherbert (the new Chief Secretary) had soon to report that there was no hope of a Government majority against the Grattan-Fox proposal. The Government wished to proceed constitutionally by Bill as in England; but Grattan and his friends would not hear of it, and in February they carried by nearly two to one an address to

\* Throughout the whole of this Regency incident the Dropmore papers are of the utmost value. Hist. MSS. Commission. "MSS. preserved at Dropmore," vol. i., especially letters between the Marquis of Buckingham and W. W. Grenville, pp. 364-471.

## IRELAND AND THE REGENCY

the Prince calling on him to assume “ the Government of this nation during the continuance of his Majesty’s present indisposition and no longer ; and, under the style and title of Prince Regent of Ireland, in the name and on the behalf of his Majesty, to exercise and administer, according to the laws and Constitution of this kingdom, all regal power, jurisdiction, and prerogatives to the Crown and Government thereof belonging.”

The phraseology of the concluding lines was copied, as Grattan pointed out, from that by which William III. was requested to assume the crown of England after the flight of James II., and to that extent Grattan had a precedent ; but the analogy was unfortunate in more ways than one. In 1688 the English and the Irish Parliaments had adhered to different sovereigns, and for the Irish Parliament now to act in defiance of the opinion of the English Parliament directed attention to the fact that if it insisted on its extreme rights the Irish Parliament might once more provoke strife, or even war, between the two countries. It was only six years since Grattan had guaranteed that his Constitution of 1782 would put an end once for all to the possibility of friction, or even of suspicion, between Ireland and England ; and here was the possibility opened up, and opened up by Grattan himself at the bidding of Fox and Sheridan, of the most serious of all imaginable friction—different rulers, with different or conflicting powers, in the two kingdoms.

Fitzgibbon adopted his usual course when he wished to recall the Irish Parliament to its senses. He called on the Clerk at the table to read the Act governing the situation. It was the fourth of William and Mary which declared the Sovereign of

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

England to be “ by undoubted right the Sovereign of Ireland also.” Fitzgibbon knew that the whole gang of place and pension hunters had deserted to what they believed to be the new ruler, and so he opened by admitting that what he had to say would have no effect on the other side ; but he wished, he said, to make it clear where they stood. By the law just read “ the Crown of Ireland and the Crown of England are inseparably united, and the Irish Parliament is totally independent of the British Parliament. The first of these propositions,” he pointed out, “ is your security, the second your freedom ; any other language tends to the separation of the Crowns or the subjection of your Parliament.” Six years ago the Irish Parliament, under Grattan’s leadership, stated all their grievances, and they were all redressed. The Irish Parliament had deliberately adopted the procedure under which Irish Bills should become law only on passing under the Great Seal of England.

“ Let me suppose,” Fitzgibbon continued, “ that we in the dignity of our independence appoint a Regent for Ireland, being a different person from the Regent of England—a case not utterly impossible if you insist on our appointing the Prince of Wales before it is known whether he will accept the Regency of England ; and suppose we should go further and desire him to give the Royal assent to our Bills, he would say : ‘ My good people of Ireland, you have by your law made the Great Seal of England essentially necessary to be affixed to each Bill before it passes in Ireland. That seal is in the hands of the Chancellor of England, who is a very sturdy fellow. That Chancellor is an officer under the Regent of England. I have no authority over him, and so, my very good people of Ireland, you

## THE VICEROY'S REFUSAL

had better apply to the Regent of England.' . . . If it is to be a point of Irish dignity to differ from the Parliament of England to show our independence, I very much fear the sober men in this country who have estates to lose will soon become sick of independence."

The address being voted, Buckingham acted on the advice of Fitzgibbon, who pointed out that the address was altogether unconstitutional, if not treasonable, and that if the Houses had power to invest any one with regal power independent of statute, they might convey the same powers to Louis XVI., or to his Holiness the Pope, or to Mr. Grattan himself. So he simply refused to receive or transmit such an address to one who was by law a subject.\* The Duke of Leinster and five others were then appointed a deputation to convey the address and present it to the Prince personally, and whilst they were on their way the King recovered ! Says Lord Rosebery : "As if to show that the humour of the situation was inexhaustible, there arrived at this juncture the luckless Irish deputation with an absolute offer of the Regency to the Prince of Wales. They were received with universal hilarity, which their keen sense of the ridiculous made them, we may be sure, the first to feel. Their appearance was the crowning mortification of the discomfited Heir Apparent."

\* Buckingham's form of refusal, no doubt drafted by Fitzgibbon, was brief and masterly: "My allegiance to the King and my duty to the Prince of Wales oblige me to decline transmitting this address. For I know not of any power or authority under which his Royal Highness can take upon him the government of this realm, and can administer in the name and on the behalf of his Majesty all regal powers, jurisdictions, and prerogatives, until he shall be enabled by law so to do." Dropmore Papers, i. 404.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

The “crowning mortification” of the place-hunters who had tried to reap their harvest too soon was, however, still to come. Knowing each other, and knowing the risks they ran if anything went wrong, Leinster, Shannon, the Ponsonbys, and their hangers-on, to the number of over fifty, had signed a solemn compact in the form of a Round Robin to the effect that they should all stand or fall together. The Duke of Leinster had recently secured (as a sinecure, of course) the Mastership of the Rolls, and the rest had done as well as they could for themselves in their several degrees. Under the Regent these jobs would have been secure, and many more would have been added unto them ; but when the Regency scheme came down about their ears like a house of cards they had to ask where were they ? It was truly a trying time for men whose triumph had seemed almost assured. They were all “servants of the Crown,” and therefore liable to dismissal for opposing the Government. Buckingham had already reported that “the aristocracy who had been broken once under his Majesty’s direction had again combined,” and if his authority was to have any meaning, the situation must be met “by measures of the utmost decision and severity.”

The majority in the House of Commons came back with almost ludicrous haste to the support of the Government, and defeated a motion brought forward by Grattan condemning the Viceroy. The signatories of the Round Robin tried to make their peace—to explain that they had meant nothing in particular. The Viceroy declined to receive them as a group, but said he would consider the representations of any individuals who would, as a preliminary, disclaim the “written association.”

## THE ROUND ROBIN

Then they turned to Fitzgibbon, who had derided them as “Whiteboys” and called their mutual insurance arrangement “a combination amongst distinguished lords and gentlemen” which, if it had been proved in a lower section of society, “would have made the combining parties liable to be whipped at the cart’s tail.” They assured him that they had no wish to embarrass his Majesty’s Government ; they would do anything “to remove the unfavourable impression from his Majesty’s mind ” ; they would bring the offending document and destroy it before his eyes. The suppliants were for the most part forgiven. Leinster and the Ponsonbys lost their jobs, a few minor tools were punished, and the Regency plot and the Round Robin passed into history together.

All this was in 1789, and was practically the closing chapter in the history of the old *régime* in Ireland, although none of the actors knew it. The eighteenth century was rapidly passing away. Lord Lifford, whose appointment as Chancellor takes us back to the beginning of Townshend’s time, resigned, and Fitzgibbon, the first Irishman to hold the post, succeeded to it without, however, giving up his dominant position in the Castle. A general election was imminent ; Buckingham and Fitzherbert retired. Not least noteworthy was the fact that a youth called Wolfe Tone, having discovered that “classical learning is nonsense ” ; having made an offer to Pitt to found a military colony in the South Seas “in order to put a bridle on Spain in time of peace,” and having, to his great wrath, received no answer, although the letter was “delivered with my own hands to the porter in Downing Street ” ; having married on nothing a year, and having in consequence found his financial affairs “exceedingly

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

embarrassed"; having been called to the Bar and discovered that law was as great "nonsense" as learning, finally sat down and wrote an election pamphlet in defence of the Whig Club, and was thus launched on a political career. Most important of all for England and for Ireland, the troubles in Paris came to a head, the Bastille was taken, and the French Revolution launched.

To the last, monarchical France did not give up its interest in Ireland. Not long since we had the tale of Napper Tandy and his friends drinking on their knees to the health of Louis XVI., and the Irish Brigade and the smuggling business furnished constant means of communication between the two countries. Mr. Lecky has unearthed some interesting documents in the French archives which show that even in the very year of the Bastille France was feeling her way as to the sentiments of Ireland in case of another war. Luzerne, the French Ambassador in London, employed one Bancroft, an American merchant in London, as his secret agent; but the general result was not particularly encouraging. The Regency question, it was true, showed considerable differences; but Luzerne probably realised Pitt's strength and Fox's weakness. The idea of separation had only been adopted by enthusiasts, for Ireland was too weak to stand alone. Bancroft's investigations soon revealed to him that the discontented section had no settled plan and were much divided, and the French Ambassador's own summing-up was that matters were not ripe, and that the Versailles Government had better be careful, since "war would be the inevitable result of the slightest indiscretion."

## CHAPTER IX

### REVOLUTION IN EARNEST

IRISH writers are much in the habit of discussing the affairs of the Dublin Parliament from the local point of view, as if its actions and reactions were the product of local forces, of the "aristocratic faction," of the patriots, or even of the "Liberty mob" whom they called in aid from time to time to terrorise timid Viceroys. The fact is that the only occurrences of real importance in Dublin politics for a century were the direct outcome of great movements in other countries : of the Whig Revolution of 1688, with the permanent ascendancy of that "Protestant interest" on which the ideas of Molyneux and Swift and Lucas were all based ; of the American Revolution, which carried the Ulster colony and most of the Dublin Whigs into the Republican camp ; and, finally, of the French Revolution, whose results were not long in making themselves apparent. It is hardly necessary to point out that none of these movements was in its origin racial or religious or had any connection with what, to use more modern phraseology, we may call Irish Nationalist sentiment. The first resulted in submerging Irish nationality in its completest overthrow since the days of Elizabeth. The second, enthusiastically supported by the Northern Presbyterians, who, indeed, had a big share in it, was either ignored or formally opposed by the Southern

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

Catholics,\* who offered “two millions of loyal, faithful, and affectionate hearts and hands” to assist in its suppression. As for the French Revolution, it was essentially cosmopolitan as opposed to “national” in its inspiration and its tendencies, whilst its massacres of priests and attacks on churches and on the Pope were little likely to recommend it to the Church of the majority in Ireland.

Grattan, indeed, as has been said, had the idea that “philosophy” was to be the end of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, and men like Napper Tandy and the Belfast Republicans could drink to the French Revolution, whilst Wolfe Tone rejoiced to find that Paine’s “Rights of Man” was “the Koran of Belfast”; but the common people, Protestant or Catholic, read neither Rousseau nor Paine, and their old racial and religious feelings remained unchanged. Even in Buckingham’s time the old flame had broken out. It will be remembered that Townshend, at the very beginning of his Vice-royalty, found himself involved in the Hearts of Oak and Hearts of Steel troubles in the North. The complaint then was that the landlords, in violation of the tenant right custom, demanded exorbitant and confiscatory rents, and when these were refused evicted their Protestant tenants and gave their farms “to Papists who will promise any rent.” Wholesale emigration to America relieved the pressure to some extent at the time, but the irrepressible conflict was always ready to break out on the smallest provocation, and in 1785 “Peep o’ Day Boys” and “Defenders” were at war again in the border counties where the hostile races overlapped. At first the disturbances seemed hardly more

\* See the Catholic Address, p. 102.

## REPUBLICAN BELFAST

serious than faction fights, but to those who could see it was clear that the question of the land—in other words, of the right to live in the country—was again at the bottom of it. The one party remembered the old tale of Protestant farmers evicted and “Papists” installed in their stead, the others resisted the attempt to drive them out of lands to which they claimed to have a still earlier title, and each side blamed the other for beginning the dispute.

Westmorland, the new Viceroy, proceeded to study his subject, and wrote elaborate essays in the usual Viceregal fashion. Belfast, he discovered, was Republican; but that did not mean that the Northerners were prepared to submit themselves to the numerical superiority of their ancient enemies, for they were “far from agreed respecting Catholic emancipation”—were, in fact, “bigoted Protestants.” “It is very extraordinary,” he remarks, “but I really believe the two sects of the Irish hate and fear each other as much as they did one hundred years ago.” The evil was “every day increasing,” and in Armagh and in the border districts of Down and Louth collisions between Peep ’o Day Boys and Defenders were constant.

Dublin having founded a Whig Club under the auspices of Grattan, Belfast followed with its Northern Whig Club, in whose original list the names of Charlemont, O’Neill, Hamilton Rowan, Crawford, and Robert Stewart (afterwards Lord Castlereagh) are prominent. When Wolfe Tone wrote the Whig pamphlet already mentioned he received what he calls “a very handsome letter” from Henry Joy (the secretary) announcing his election to the honorary membership of the Northern Whig Club. George Ponsonby, who managed his

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

faction on business lines, also took note of the pamphlet, promptly looked the young author up, and there were hints of a brief with a big fee and of an early seat in Parliament for the new recruit. The Ponsonbys owned or controlled twenty-two seats in the Irish Parliament, and this was an offer not to be despised, the more so, as Tone naïvely adds, "as my wife's fortune was now nearly exhausted." But it was not Tone's destiny to become a tame follower of Grattan and the Ponsonbys.

Henry Joy, above alluded to, is the writer to whom we are indebted for those Historical Collections\* which form an indispensable clue to Ulster politics at this period. Wolfe Tone scorns accuracy in small matters, and Joy tells us that, not he, but Dr. Haliday, the friend and factotum of Charlemont, was the original secretary of the Northern Whig Club. But Joy was in their secrets, and he may be relied on when he remarks that the club was founded, not, as the timid souls at the Castle imagined, for purposes of Republican propaganda, but "from a just and probably well-founded dread of the increase of democratic principles in the town of Belfast." Charlemont's vanity, in fact, would not allow him to be led far by anybody. He had a fright when the Volunteers got out of hand, and from that time onward he played a more cautious game. Wolfe Tone had not yet crossed his path, but he knew from his confidential correspondent Haliday that some of the wilder spirits in Belfast were again heading straight for anarchy and rebellion, and "I think," he wrote, "that an institution of this kind would, by holding out a congregation to the true believers at Belfast, be a means of fixing and

\* "Historical Collections Relating to the Town of Belfast," 1817.

## TONE'S GREAT DISCOVERY

even recalling many who might otherwise wander from the faith."

Meanwhile Tone had wandered very far indeed from the faith of those cautious Whigs who were, as Grattan discovered in the case of Fox, revolutionaries only when they were in opposition. He had, he tells us, made "a very great discovery." Learning, law, soldiering, colonising, had all been taken up and abandoned in turn by this restless and ambitious youth. And now he washed his hands of the "peddling" Whigs. No more would he apply for employment to Pitt or Grenville or Richmond. Grattan, with his speeches and his resolutions and his "bungling and imperfect" Constitution of 1782, was all wrong. The Whigs—"an aristocracy affecting the language of patriotism," he calls them on another occasion—were not a pin better than the Tories. It was England, from whom he had twice sought employment, that was the enemy. "Ireland would never be free, prosperous, or happy until she was independent, and that independence was unattainable whilst the connection with England existed"; in fact, again to use a more modern phrase, the "last link" must go. This, then, was Tone's great discovery "To subvert the tyranny of our execrable Government, to break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils, and to assert the independence of my country—those were my objects." And the great difference between Tone and the others who had appeared, orated, and disappeared on the same scene through the century was that Tone had at last found his mission, that he believed in himself, and that he meant what he said.

It is easy from Tone's own chattering, light-

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

hearted diary to write him down, as Mr. Froude has done, a tipsy, bragging adventurer, as something no better than Napper Tandy ; but, all allowances made, the simple fact remains that Wolfe Tone came very near to being a great man. He impressed both Napoleon and Wellington. And, looking back over more than a century, we can now see that during seven portentous years of Irish history, from the formation of the United Irishmen till the Rebellion, two really strong men stand out in opposition to each other—Fitzgibbon and Tone.

The Revolution had set in, and Charlemont and Grattan were from this time on only as dust on the wheel. Greater forces than they could either measure or control were at work. Government was as hopelessly corrupt and inefficient as usual. The election of 1790 made no great changes except to show that the North was waking up. Belfast, of course, was a pocket borough, and elected whoever was presented by the Marquis of Donegall. Carrickfergus and Newry, on the other hand, were “open,” and sometimes provided close and exciting contests. The Northern Whig Club carried both seats in Antrim and one in Down, where their candidate was Robert Stewart. His father, now Lord Londonderry, had held the seat since 1776, but there was a specially bitter and prolonged struggle on this occasion. Young Stewart only came of age during the contest, and the polling was kept open for two months, the election costing the Stewart family, we are told, no less than £60,000. The new Parliament met and talked much and did nothing, as usual. All eyes were watching France, and all were asking how the events there would affect Ireland. Volunteering had started again with great energy, and the citizen soldiers pledged themselves not to lay

## REVOLUTIONARY BELFAST

down their arms till liberty was won. The new members for Antrim, on approaching Belfast, were welcomed with a discharge of cannon from the two Volunteer artillery corps, were placed in a triumphal car, decorated with the cap of Liberty, and entertained at a banquet with numerous toasts to France and to America.

Tone soon recognised that if he wanted to fan the flame of revolution his place was Belfast rather than Dublin. He had in 1789 made the acquaintance of a young officer called Thomas Russell, who was now stationed in Belfast, and from whom he heard of the progress of events there. Things were not going too smoothly. Burke's attack on the French Revolution had many sympathisers, although, as we have said, Paine's "Rights of Man," written in reply to it, was the "Koran" of the Belfast republicans. A great gathering was organised on July 14, 1791, to celebrate the anniversary of the capture of the Bastille, and the old difficulty about the toast list came up. The advanced party endeavoured to introduce a declaration in favour of the franchise for the Catholics, but those in charge would not have it, so that, whilst Washington and Mirabeau and Paine were toasted, the Catholics had to be satisfied with an aspiration for "an extension of privileges." The Whig Club also met in celebration of the occasion, and drank to "The Glorious Memory of King William" and also to "The Majesty of the People." Young Robert Stewart, the new M.P. for Down, was present, we are told, and joined in drinking to a sentiment which was little in accord with his more mature principles, and of which he was afterwards reminded often enough by his opponents.

Tone could do his share, and more, in the drinking

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

of toasts, but he was thinking things out in a practical direction. He saw at once the absurdity of the central idea of the Constitution of 1782 and of Grattan's Parliament, that a handful of favoured Protestants should do all the perorating and get all the pudding, whilst the Catholics were occasionally to be placated by an "extension of privileges," such extension being guaranteed as not inconsistent with the perpetuation in Ireland of Protestant ascendancy. In September 1791, he published under the signature of "A Northern Whig" a pamphlet entitled "An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland," from which we have already quoted his opinion of Grattan's Constitution, and which enjoyed a prodigious success. In July, on hearing of the emasculated resolution on the Catholic question, he had written in his diary : " My present impression is to become a red-hot Catholic, seeing that in the party apparently most anxious for reform it is rather a monopoly than an extension of liberty which is their object." The pamphlet being his introduction, he now proceeded north, arriving in Belfast in October.

In Belfast Tone found a secret revolutionary committee at work. They were, he says, "not known or suspected of co-operating," but, in fact, they directed all movements. He found a feeling in favour of "existence independent of England," but nothing could be done "till the religious sects here are united and England engaged in a foreign war." Ireland once free, these experienced politicians decided "she would in arts, commerce, and manufactures spring up like an air balloon and leave England behind her at an immense distance." Meanwhile it is admitted, however, that "the North was not yet ripe" for revolution, but "time and

## THE UNITED IRISHMEN

discussion are the only things wanting to forward what is advancing rapidly." When Tone and his friends had agreed on the resolutions, a public meeting was called on October 18 and the Society of United Irishmen formed. Even yet, however, the union was not very apparent, and Tone records in his diary a series of "furious battles" on the Catholic question in which Tone and Russell, with one or two others, were always in the minority. Dr. Bruce, a prominent Northern leader, assured Tone that "thirty out of forty Protestants would be found whenever the time came to be adverse to the liberation of the Roman Catholics."

A second branch of the United Irishmen was formed by Tone and Russell on their return to Dublin, and the organisation rapidly spread, the open movement, as usual, serving as a "bonnet" for the secret committee which was doing the real work. The society aimed, according to its prospectus, at "an equal representation of all the people in Parliament" and at "a brotherhood of affection, an identity of interests, a communion of rights, and an union of power among Irishmen of all religious persuasions." In the following January a newspaper called the *Northern Star* was founded in Belfast as the organ of the United Irishmen. Its avowed principles were those of the United Societies, but Tone explains that the idea was "to give a fair statement of all that passed in France," from which we may fairly assume that its real object was to spread the principles of the French Revolution. Another "necessary, though not avowed," object was, he said, "to erect Ireland into a Republic independent of England."

Grattan was not, of course, taken into the confidence of Tone and his associates, for it was known

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

that he sympathised to a considerable extent with Burke in his hostility to the French Revolution—"that Gallic plant whose fruit is death, though it is not the tree of knowledge." Property, Grattan always declared, was the vital and fundamental basis of the Constitution, and if you secured for the Constitution the support of the mass of property it was safe. Personal and individual representation as advocated by the United Irishmen would "destroy the influence of landed property" and thus ruin the State. Tone cared nothing for landed property, and, if possible, less for Grattan's Constitution. Naturally the men of property (those who made up the Irish Parliament, that is to say) rallied to Fitzgibbon, who, on the whole, they thought, was a safer guardian than Grattan; but between pressure from England and threats of revolution in Ireland their position was not a very happy one in the early 'nineties, and their sudden vacillations on the Catholic relief question are quite inexplicable.

Westmorland was writing alarmist letters to Pitt and Dundas, who, on their part, showed considerable indifference to the complaints. Pitt's position seems to have been, in his own mind at least, one of indifference: You have repudiated the guidance of England; we are referred to as a "foreign" country; you claim to be the "Irish Nation" and as such to govern yourselves; you reject our proffer of Commercial Union; you claim to choose your own Regent and to give him such powers as you think right. Very well; govern yourselves, and don't trouble us with your complaints. You are the "Irish Nation": why, then, ask us to protect you against that still larger nation whose existence you have ignored? On

## PITT AND THE IRISH GOVERNMENT

December 26, 1791, Dundas wrote almost brutally to Westmorland that so far as the English Government were concerned, they thought that, alike on grounds of justice and of policy, the Irish Parliament should give "a favourable ear to the fair claims of the Catholics of Ireland." "These people," he went on, "form the great body of the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Ireland, and as such are entitled to the communication of all such advantages as can be given them without danger to the existing establishment and to the general interests of the Empire. . . . It is, therefore, well worthy of serious consideration how far it is wise for those who look forward to the preservation of the present frame of the Irish Government to run the risk of exciting a dangerous antipathy against that form of Government in the minds of the great body of the people."

Along with this Dundas sent a private epistle, in which even plainer language was used. Here, again, was the not obscure hint that the Ascendancy clique cannot remain in their present position. They cannot insult England on the one hand, and the bulk of the Irish people on the other. "The public and the Parliament of Great Britain should feel that the object for which their aid is demanded is one in which they are interested, or in which at least the Irish Government is founded in justice and policy in resisting the wishes of the body of the people of Ireland. If it is a mere question whether one description of Irishmen or another are to enjoy a monopoly or pre-eminence"—then, in a word, the English Government are not particularly interested. And in conclusion: "There cannot be a permanency in the frame of the Government and Constitution of Ireland unless the Protestants

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

will lay aside their prejudices and forego their exclusive pre-eminence."

No wonder that such a message was received with "consternation." It showed that the wondrous Constitution which Grattan had called on all the universe to admire and adore as the "august" perfection of human wisdom was little better than a patent absurdity. Fitzgibbon had shown one form of this absurdity in his argument about the Great Seal and the Regency, and here was the English Government pointing out another which was becoming every day more clear in the actual working of the machine—that with all their heroic defiance of England this "Irish" Parliament, like the property of all belonging to it, was not worth an hour's purchase without the armed support of England. Here may be quoted once more the very clear warning of Fitzgibbon at the time of the Regency debate: "If it is to be a point of Irish dignity to differ from the Parliament of England to show our independence, I very much fear that sober men will soon become sick of independence."

Westmorland remonstrated. "In your private letter," he says, "I am directed to impress on the minds of leading people, as a guide for their decision in the coming discussion, that they must not expect the power and resources of England to be exerted in any contest that may arise for pre-eminence or power between religious distinctions of Irishmen; that it is your decided opinion that all such differences as far as regards political considerations should be done away. . . . The final consequence will be a confederacy of the Protestants, with very few exceptions, to resist every concession. They will resolve to support their own situation by their

## WESTMORLAND'S COMPLAINT

own power. You will lose for the Catholics the very indulgence which you desire to procure. You will cause the collision which it is your object to prevent." And so forth at great length. Needless to say, Pitt and Dundas saw all this quite as well as did Westmorland and his advisers. Their object simply was to make the gentlemen in Dublin look certain elementary facts in the face. These facts Westmorland, who seems to have drifted entirely into the hands of the oligarchy, was quite unable to see.

"What," he implores his Chief Secretary, Hobart, to find out while in London, "has so much discredited the Irish Parliament in England? Examine the history: have they not without exception been the most convenient engines of British management since the days of King William? The object of England must be to govern Ireland. She has in the present Constitution a Parliament formed of such materials that she always has and probably always will be able to manage it, and she has a sect, deficient in numbers, but possessing the property, magistracy, and influence in the country, pledged to maintain that establishment." And again in the same month, as the session was coming on (January 25, 1792), Westmorland wrote that the feeling was rapidly rising. "Not only members of Parliament, but almost every Protestant in the Kingdom was under such alarm that it was not possible to foresee what effect a recommendation of concessions to the Catholics from the Throne might produce." The Corporation of Dublin had protested, and its protest would be echoed by every Corporation in the Kingdom. The general language of the House of Commons—Grattan's House—was "still

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

for resistance *in limine* and *in toto*, except among the friends of the Administration who have sacrificed their private judgments to the wishes of the British Government."

Pitt gave way, probably not discontented with the demonstration that nothing could be done with such a Parliament. For the present the matter of reform or relief could be dropped. But he concluded : " Any pledge, however, against anything more in future seems to me in every view useless and dangerous ; and it is what on such a question no prudent Government can concur in. I say nothing on the question of resisting all concessions, because I am in hopes there is no danger of that line being taken. If I were, I should really think it the most fatal measure that could be contrived for the destruction ultimately of every object we wish to preserve."

Westmorland was probably correctly informed as to the extent of the opposition that any proposal for Catholic relief would meet with in the Irish Parliament. Fitzgibbon and the Lords were, of course, hostile. The new Speaker, Foster, by far the most influential man in the House of Commons, was and remained bitterly opposed to any concession. Sir John Parnell, who had succeeded Foster as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and who backed him up to the last in his opposition to the Union, was equally hostile. He held that "there was nothing to fear from the Catholics : they had always receded when met : he believed the bulk of them were perfectly satisfied : there would be no dissatisfaction if the subject had not been written upon and such infinite pains taken to disturb the minds of the people."

So nothing was provided in the way of Catholic

## FOSTER AND PARNELL

relief at the opening of the session of 1792. But Sir Hercules Langrishe, Burke's friend, gave notice of a Bill, and on January 25 it was introduced. It proposed to admit Catholics to the practice and profession of the law, and to remove some other restrictions which hampered their domestic or business life. Hobart, the Chief Secretary, by a very curious arrangement seconded it, but without a speech. The House accepted the Bill, but did not quite know what to do with it. A petition in favour of the Catholic claims sent forward by the United Irishmen of Belfast was indignantly rejected, Sir Boyle Roche describing it as "the insidious petition of a turbulent, disorderly set of people, whom no King can govern or no God can please." There were endless speeches leading nowhere, except to show that no one seemed anxious to accept the responsibility for the rejection of so extremely moderate a measure and ultimately, in spite of Westmorland's prognostications it passed through all its stages without serious opposition.

In the course of Westmorland's too voluminous correspondence he strikes out one illuminating spark. On November 18, 1792, long after the close of the session just mentioned, he elicits Pitt's earliest detailed statement on the subject of a Union of the two Parliaments. "The idea," he says, "of the present fermentation, gradually bringing both parties to think of a Union with this country, has long been in my mind. I hardly dare flatter myself with the hope of its taking place, but I believe it, though itself not easy to be accomplished, to be the only solution for other and greater difficulties. The admission of the Catholics to a share of suffrage would not then be dangerous. . . . You will judge when and to whom this idea can be confided. It must

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

certainly require great delicacy and management, but I am heartily glad that it is at last in your thoughts."

Outside Parliament Westmorland's account of the state of opinion in the country at the end of 1792 showed that those in high places were beginning to realise the effect of Tone's movement. The "levellers" wrote Westmorland to Dundas, "have burst forth with a degree of impertinence and noise most astonishing. They are guided by a sect called the United Irishmen. They have money. I cannot conceive where it comes from. They have appeared in every sort of sedition. They have publicly professed a determination of raising several thousand men in a National Battalion, with French mottoes for the reformation of Parliament. Their end is destroying English influence in this country. The great Catholic body is not connected with these people, but the leaders of the Dublin Committee are: and Keogh, who is the present mover of the Catholics, is a member of this Society, and has been particularly active in endeavouring to form this National Battalion. . . . The great danger is from the north, where the volunteering spirit has gained ground from dislike of the Catholics; and if that dislike should be done away with, or resentment for concession actuated them, their Republican principles may lead them to any possible mischief."

Tone, with his National Battalion and his secret revolutionary Committee—already in correspondence with the French Jacobins—was, in fact, leaving the Parliamentary leaders altogether in the background. The Catholic Committee which had existed since 1759, for the promotion of the interests of members of that church, split over the question, the aristocratic leaders, with their horror

## NORTHERN WHIG CLUB

of the French Revolution, leaving in a body whilst Tone, now Secretary of the Committee, brought it into even closer relationship with the Belfast revolutionaries. They in their turn had been advancing rapidly during 1792. In October the Volunteer Companies met and fired salutes in honour of the Battle of Valmy and the abolition of monarchy in France, and on the evening of the same day there were the usual resolutions, toasts, and illuminations.

"France is free : so may we" : "The Tyrants are fled : let the people rejoice" ; "The Rights of man established : Despotism prostrate." Such were a few of the sentiments. Most sinister of all, these worthy citizens approved by anticipation the execution of Louis XVI., which did not take place till three months later ; one of their devices being : "A gallows suspending an inverted crown, with the motto : 'May the fate of every Tyrant be that of Capet.'"

The Northern Whig Club, not to be left behind, celebrated the birthday of King William by passing resolutions rejoicing at Valmy, and calling for an "early acquiescence in the just demands of the people." On November Citizen Gregoire, as President of the French Assembly, acknowledged the congratulations of Belfast, and declared that "Yet a little moment and despots and their cannons shall be silenced : philosophy denounces them at the bar of the universe, and history, sullied with their crimes, has drawn their characters. Shortly the annals of mankind will be those of virtue." Gregoire, who was an ex-bishop, lived to be a Count under the Empire, but it is not on record that he ever succeeded in impressing on Napoleon his doctrine that despots and their cannons should be silenced.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

In December Belfast founded a society calling itself “The Irish Jacobins of Belfast,” which declared, like all the other advanced bodies, against Grattan’s Constitution, resolved that Ireland had “No National Government”—a phrase of Tone’s—and further “that as irreligious prejudices have given and are giving way in every quarter of the globe, the justice of God and the natural rights of man demand of Ireland, not to be last in the Annals of Freedom.” It is very characteristic of the total absence of “Nationalism” amongst the Ulster revolutionaries, that the Belfast Jacobins followed up this resolution by the following : “That to obtain this most desirable end, we entreat our fellow citizens of every denomination in Ireland, England, and Scotland to turn their thoughts to a National Convention in order to collect the sense of the people.” Ireland, England, and Scotland, assembled in one National Convention on the model of that ruling France would, we fear, have given as little consideration to the local demands and wishes of Ireland, as the French Assembly gave to those of La Vendée.

Little wonder that Tone was pleased with the way things were going in the north, although he had trouble with the clergy. A Jacobin Presbyterian minister, he remarks, “thinks, what I fear is true, that the Catholic clergymen are bad friends of liberty. The priest of Saintfield preached against the United Irishmen, and exhorted his people not to join such clubs.” And in another place he notes : “The Catholic spirit quite broken ; they do not even beat one another. Sad ! Sad ! Busy all day folding papers, &c., for the Munster bishops—Damn all bishops. Gog \* not quite well

\* John Keogh of the Catholic Committee.

## PITT AND CATHOLIC RELIEF

on that point. Thinks them a good thing. Non-sense. Dine at home with Neilson and McCracken. Very pleasant. "Rights of man." "French revolution." "No bishops, &c." And when the massacres broke out in Paris Tone makes a curious entry : "The devil to pay in Paris. The mob have broken open the prisons and massacred all prisoners, Montmorin, the Princess Lamballe, &c., with circumstances of great barbarity, but robbed no one. Strange mixture of cruelty and sentiment. An Irish mob would have plundered, but shed no blood. A Parisian mob murders but respects property ; which is best ? I lean to the Frenchman ; more manly. Our mob very shabby fellows. Never would have stood as the Parisians did on the 10th of August. A serjeant's guard would drive the mob of Dublin."

Pitt, meanwhile, was pushing on his ideas of Catholic relief, moved thereto possibly by Burke, who wished to take advantage of the feeling of horror amongst devout Catholics produced by the actions of the Paris mob against the Church and the Clergy. The Irish Government and Parliament obstinately held back, but Pitt and Dundas gave them no rest. The idea of concession intensely annoyed Tone, who saw in it another element that would interfere with his scheme for working up a revolutionary spirit among the Catholics. His entry on the point is worth giving in full : "February 4 (1793) Hobart presented the petition and moved for leave to bring in a Bill which is granted. The measure of relief which is intended, as chalked out by him is as follows : The elective franchise : Magistracies : Right of endowing schools : Admissibility to corporations : Right of carrying arms, subject to modification. Civil

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

offices subject also to modification ; but we shall see more when the Bill is introduced and still more when it is carried. . . . Will the Catholics be satisfied with this Bill ? I believe they will, and be damned ! I am losing ground amongst them, I see, hourly, owing to my friend Gog who I know will work me out. He does not like to have me close enough to inspect his actions, and I am much afraid he has some foul negotiations on foot."

The whole critical period of 1792-94 was one of intrigues and cross intrigues, to which at this time of day it is not always easy to find a clue. Pitt although hoping to the last for peace, was feeling his way towards alliances with Catholic powers against revolutionary France. Both for the sake of security at home and of alliances abroad he was anxious to conciliate the Catholics. The Irish Government, as we have seen, was opposed to any such concessions, and the Parliament moved by fits and starts, rejecting one day what it accepted the next. The Catholic Committee was constantly quarrelling, and its members were filled with jealousy and suspicion of each other. Tone was working indefatigably to unite Protestant and Catholic in one revolutionary army, and was making progress, although his ardent nature chafed at numerous obstacles. The Presbyterian Jacobins were a small minority of their own body, but they had the energy and the confidence to speak and act as if they represented the whole north. The Catholics were the greatest problem of all. The Belfast Jacobin manifesto, already quoted from speaks of them as being by the Penal Laws, "doomed to a state little superior to the unlettered African." Their bishops and clergy were horrified

## THE BELFAST JACOBINS

at the progress of the French revolution, and still looked to the British Government rather than to the Irish Parliament for relief. The common people, as pictured to us by Arthur Young and other travellers, were still little better than serfs, and always on the verge of starvation. But even to them the French Revolution, in spite of their Church, and in a somewhat dim and distant fashion, was making its appeal. "They heard," says a sympathetic writer,\* "that in the great land whither their fathers had gone for three generations to fight its battles a dominant and oppressive Church had been overthrown ; that an aristocracy, lording it over the children of the soil, had fallen ; that tithe had been abolished and the exactions of landlords ; and in the liberation of France they felt dimly a hope of liberation for themselves. A movement, dull, feeble, and aimless as yet, stirred these inert multitudes in a few counties, but it showed itself, not in a cry for political changes, but as a widespread disinclination to pay tithe and even rent, and in occasional risings against the landed gentry. Emissaries from Wolfe Tone and his colleagues quickened the impulse ; the White-boy system had prepared the way ; there was a considerable outburst of agrarian disorder and crime."

When the new session opened in January 1793 Pitt was being steadily pushed into war by irresistible forces, and he in turn forced the Irish Government to be reasonable. The ambition of France and her interference with other countries especially Holland, in which England took a peculiar interest, was, said the Royal speech, "neither conformable to the law of nations nor to the positive stipula-

\* W. O'Connor Morris, "Ireland, 1494-1868." Cambridge Historical Series.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

tions of existing treaties." The army and navy were therefore being augmented. A militia was to be established, and above all—here Pitt's very words were put in the Viceroy's mouth—"I have it in particular command from his Majesty to recommend it to you to apply yourselves to the consideration of such measures as may be most likely to strengthen and cement a general union of sentiment among all classes and descriptions of his Majesty's subjects, in support of the established Constitution. With this view his Majesty trusts that the situation of his Majesty's Catholic subjects will engage your serious attention, and in the consideration of this subject he relies on the wisdom and liberality of his Parliament." As Mr. Lecky points out it was in this speech, coming direct from Downing Street, that the word Catholic is first used in a Throne speech. Up till 1792 "Papist" was the usual term. In that year "Roman Catholic" was substituted, and now Pitt in his desire to conciliate uses the single word "Catholic."

Another point has been noticed. The seconder of the address was a very junior member, Arthur Wesley, who afterwards took to spelling his name Wellesley, and who, twenty years later, played his part in the closing of the great struggle whose opening was announced in the King's speech. His opponent in the final conflict was still an unemployed lieutenant, without means or prospects of service. And Robert Stewart, the third remarkable man born in the same year as Napoleon and Wellington, and whose career was curiously interlaced with theirs, was also in the House, but little interested in politics, having largely lost sympathy with the party under whose auspices he entered

## THE “FORTY SHILLING FREEHOLDERS”

public life. He had been to Paris and had watched what he called the “tumultuous pedantry” of the National Assembly, whose proceedings by no means impressed him favourably.

In spite of the mournful predictions of Westmorland and Hobart the 1793 Relief Bill met with little serious opposition. The clause conferring the franchise was carried by two to one, in spite of the opposition of the Speaker Foster, but the proposal to admit Catholics to Parliament was rejected by about the same proportional majority. As already pointed out the franchise was of little use to those who dare not exercise it except at the will of their landlords, and this brings us to the really far-reaching portion of the Act, the conferment of the franchise on the “forty shilling freeholders.” Tone, at the very outset of his career, in his “Northern Whig” pamphlet had pointed out the absurdity and disgrace of such a franchise, even in the case of the Protestant farmers who already exercised it. The franchise was a bogus one, and voters under it were multiplied by their landlords for purely electoral purposes. In arguing against the dangers that might arise from the Catholic franchise Tone had written : “ If there be serious grounds for dreading a majority of Catholics they may be removed in a very obvious mode. Extend the elective franchise to such Catholics only as have a freehold of ten pounds by the year, and on the other hand strike off the disgrace to our Constitution and our country, the wretched tribe of forty-shilling freeholders whom we see driven to their octennial market by their landlords, as much their property as the sheep or the bullocks which they brand with their names.”

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

What then possessed the framers of this Bill still further to debauch the franchise by the inclusion of a horde of bogus freeholders, sunk in the deepest ignorance, and quite incapable of exercising an independent judgment? The reports of the debates throw little light on the question. Sir Lawrence Parsons, an advanced reformer and an independent and honest member, strongly opposed the extension, very much on Tone's lines. He argued that the franchise should be given to no one under a twenty-pound-a-year valuation. It was an act of infatuation approaching madness to confer the franchise on a swarming pauper tenantry, increasing rapidly in numbers with the increase of tillage, under Foster's Corn Law. England had a forty-shilling franchise, it was true, but there it was a middle-class yeomanry franchise. The bulk of the tenants had no vote. The county electors in all England, he stated, were not more than 10,000, whereas under this scheme 50,000 could be manufactured in the County of Cork alone. Parsons argued in vain, and the "pauper" franchise was carried, the members no doubt consoling themselves with the reflection that it would be practically inoperative except in a trial of strength between two rival landlords fighting for supremacy in the same county. And so it was till the Clare election of 1828, which forced Catholic Emancipation on the United Parliament. And even then the absurdity was so great that O'Connell and his friends consented to the abolition of this very franchise as a condition preliminary to Emancipation!

Over a century after the old struggle the "Creevey Papers" \* gave us what is probably the correct version of the incident. In 1828 Creevey

\* "Creevey Papers," vol. ii. p. 178.

## THE FIRST EMANCIPATION ACT

was staying in Ireland with Lord Donoughmore, a descendant of the famous Hely Hutchinson. "Lord Donoughmore," he writes, "was the principal agent in what I am about to state, and what is more he is the only surviving one." . . . "In the year 1792 the Catholics of Ireland presented a petition to the Irish House of Commons praying for a qualified franchise in the election of Members of Parliament. Five or six days after it was presented David Latouche moved that such a petition should be taken off the table and out of the House, upon the avowed ground of the audacity of its prayer. The House divided—for Latouche's motion, 208; against it, 25. Forbes and I were tellers." Donoughmore goes on to explain the agitation that was got up in consequence of the Catholic Committee—a movement in which he claims a leading share. In 1793 a Catholic Convention was called in Dublin. Then, he continues: "My brother waited on Hobart, the Chief Secretary, and asked what he meant to do with the Catholic Delegates then assembled in Dublin. Hobart said, 'Put them down by force.' To which my brother said, 'You dare not, but if you have any conciliatory measure to propose to them I offer myself as the channel'" ; and so they parted.

"A short time after this Hobart sent for my brother and asked to see the petition. He said, 'You shall see the petition, but you shall not forward it to the King because you are their enemy.' So they selected Lord French, Keogh, Byrne, Bellew, and Devereux as their delegates to go to London and present their petition to the King. Grattan and I met them there to keep them up to their mark and to see that they did not betray their cause. We found that Pitt and Dundas, after

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

two or three interviews with these delegates, said they should advise the prayer of their petition being granted, and that the qualification should be forty shillings.

"Upon this Grattan and I asked to see Dundas, and we had different interviews with him in which we stated that the Catholics, in asking for a qualified franchise, had never thought of less than twenty pound a year, and that they would be content with even fifty pounds. We urged again and again the impolicy of so low a franchise: and all we could get from Dundas was that it must be the same that it was in England. And so in 1793, the very same Parliament that would not permit the Catholic petition praying for a qualified franchise to be upon their table now was made to give them the forty-shilling franchise."

1794 was no improvement on 1793. The Catholic Relief Bill had received the Royal assent in April 1793, whereupon the Catholic Committee dissolved itself. In any other country, and at any other time, this might have been taken as the close of controversy for the moment, but with the revolutionary feeling then in the ascendant it only meant an outbreak in some other direction. The Committee which was largely composed of wealthy men voted £2000 for a statue to the King in gratitude for his friendly reception of their petition, and £1500 and a gold medal to Wolfe Tone. Tone himself, needless to say, was very wrathful at the prospect of a cessation of agitation, and he points out in his memoirs that instead of being satisfied the Catholics ought to have demanded a great deal more: "By their exclusion from the two Houses of Parliament," he writes, "the whole body of the Catholic Gentry of Ireland, a high-spirited race of

## THE FRENCH WAR

men, are insulted, and disgraced. . . . If the Catholics deserved what has been granted they deserved what has been withheld." And so forth. But in reality Tone had long ago despaired of the Catholic gentry as he did of their bishops—as he did indeed of the Catholics altogether, without foreign help.

The French war had begun and Wolfe Tone and his friends promptly turned to the Republic for assistance. Westmorland and Hobart again set up their wail and declared that the people were so persuaded of their strength that they would never be quiet "until they are actually beaten into a different opinion." It was the country and not the helpless Parliament that had to be considered. Lord Edward Fitzgerald, the Duke of Leinster's brother, who had created a scene in the Commons in the last session, went to Paris and asked for 4000 men to put heart into the rebellion. Another American spy in the French service was sent over to report, but as in the case of Bancroft in 1789 it was found that the facts of the situation did not coincide with the representations. The trade of informer began to flourish in Ireland, and the names of the leaders soon found their way to Fitzgibbon and the Government. Another serious symptom of trouble was the renewal of the warfare between Peep-o'-day boys and Defenders in Ulster and the border counties. As before, each tried to drive the others out of the district, and each accused the others of being the aggressors. Louth was an old fighting county, and here it appears to have been at its worst. At the Spring Assizes of 1793 twenty-one Defenders were sentenced to death, and thirty-seven to transportation. The extension of the franchise in 1793 was calculated to add an

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

additional bitterness to the conflict. Originally the Catholics were charged with offering increased rents for farms from which Protestants had been evicted. Up till 1793 the landlord who so acted might have gained a paying tenant, but he lost a voter, whereas now he could gain both money and votes, since by breaking up his farms into smaller holdings he could secure many rackrented tenants and many votes for a holding that formerly sustained only one family. Wakeman later on reported that Lord Downshire had turned his estate into a "warren of freeholders" in order to win back the representation of County Down by the creation of bogus voters.

Generally speaking the country seems to have got badly out of hand during the reign of Westmorland—the feeblest and most incompetent of Viceroys. He could do nothing but write lamentations about "the levelling principles of the French Revolution" which affected Belfast and Dublin and the Associations of United Irishmen which were "propagating sedition" all over the country. At this point Fitzgibbon made an important capture, and secured discoveries that enabled him to secure some of the more active of the United Irishmen. One Jackson, a degraded clergyman who had played many parts in London, and who in Paris had become an ardent disciple of the Revolution, came over to London in the spring of 1794 on a mission from the Committee of Public Safety. London was not sufficiently ripe, but Jackson foolishly babbled of his mission to one Cockayne, whom he had known previously, and Cockayne promptly communicated with the Government. Jackson went on to Dublin in company with Cockayne, who was a solicitor and who intro-

## JACKSON AND TONE

duced him to McNally, a popular Irish barrister and defender of patriots in trouble, to which profession he also added that of informer. Tone joined the party at dinner and on other occasions, and Fitzgibbon soon had enough material to implicate if not convict Tone himself and several of his friends. Jackson was arrested, and Tone found himself, as he says, "in a very critical situation." He was in the power of mean and untrustworthy men who knew most of his sentiments and plans, and who could probably hang him, as they were preparing to do, and actually did in the case of Jackson. Being trapped, he acted with characteristic boldness. He went direct to "a gentleman, high in confidence with the then administration" and made a clean breast of it—"told him at once fairly every step I had taken." His confidant was probably one of the Beresfords who would naturally consult Fitzgibbon. Next to tracking down a conspirator the Chancellor appears to have enjoyed helping him to escape when he was in his clutches. And so, almost contemptuously, Tone was permitted to leave for America—"they suffered me to depart," he says, "without any stipulation whatsoever." He passed through Belfast, renewed his friendship with some fellow conspirators there, sailed in the *Cincinnatus* for Philadelphia, and a few months later landed at Havre, with very meagre credentials and a slender purse for the purposes of persuading the Revolutionary Government to undertake an invasion of Ireland.

Grattan had no part in all this; his influence had been destroyed, and he had, indeed, largely dropped out of public notice for the time, when "the curse of mischance" again gave him an opening. Pitt, feeling the need of strengthening

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

his Government in view of the European crisis, formed in 1794 a working arrangement with the Portland Whigs. The conduct of Fox had made him impossible, and he had dragged down several respectable names along with his own. The Duke of Portland, who had been Viceroy in the critical year of 1782, and who had presided over the short-lived Coalition Cabinet of 1783, was, however, in a different category, and he and his friends Spencer, Fitzwilliam and Windham were accepted as allies and colleagues by the Prime Minister. Office in those days meant a considerable distribution of "spoils," and Ireland was assigned to Portland and his group as their "sphere of influence." Portland himself took the Home Office, under which, at that time, the Irish Secretary was placed, and it was arranged that as soon as suitable provision could be made for Westmorland, Fitzwilliam, who had more than once before had the offer of the post, should succeed him as Viceroy.

Here begin a series of mistakes and misunderstandings unparalleled even in the chequered story of English rule in Ireland. Chatham in his time had done a good deal to break up the old system of Government by family cliques, and William Pitt in his ten years of Premiership had been doing his best to choose good men independent of the party label. His calling of Portland and Fitzwilliam, however, was in itself a confession that the old Whig families were still a power in the land. But there were limitations. When Pitt consented to Ireland being the special province of the Portland party he meant that they should have their proper share of the appointments and the patronage, not that they should take the Government of the country in hand and violently reverse the policy

## THE FITZWILLIAM CRISIS

of the Prime Minister. The time was past when such things could be done even in Ireland. Fitzwilliam, on the other hand, thought that everything was to be in his hands, and laid his plans accordingly. As Lord Rosebery puts it : “ Fitzwilliam appears to have thought Ireland was made over to him as were Lampsacus and Magnesia to Themistocles for his bread and his wine : and that Pitt would have no more to do with its Government and the policy pursued there than with Finland or Languedoc. This hallucination was due partly to the idiosyncrasy of Fitzwilliam himself, but mainly to the strange proprietary principles of Government to which allusion has already been made, which were held, consciously or unconsciously, though quite conscientiously by the Whig party.” When it is added on the same authority, that Fitzwilliam although a man of generous sympathies and honest enthusiasms was “ not less wrongheaded than headstrong : absolutely devoid of judgment, reticence, and tact,”\* the result may be imagined.

Fitzwilliam’s conditional appointment was arranged in August, and he at once began to act as if he were already Viceroy, although no notice had been given to Lord Westmorland. He wrote to Grattan discussing the “ system ” which he meant to adopt, and added “ it is to you, sir, and your friends the Ponsonbys that I look for assistance.” Lord Grenville, Secretary of State, took alarm, and hinted to his brother, whom Fitzwilliam wished to appoint Chief Secretary, that “ ideas are going about and are much encouraged in Dublin of ‘ new systems ’ there and of changes of men and measures.” And in another letter Grenville, speaking even more plainly, said, “ I certainly have not,

\* Rosebery’s “ Pitt ” p. 182.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

for one, consented to surrender Ireland to the Duke of Portland and Lord Fitzwilliam, under the Government of Mr. Ponsonby." Pitt, himself when he heard of what was going on in his name, was equally clear. Besides, the impossibility of sacrificing any supporters of Government, "I ought," he said, "to add that the very idea of a *new system*—as far as I understand what is meant by that term—and especially one formed without previous connection or concert with the rest of the King's servants here, is in itself what I feel it utterly impossible to accede to."

Lord Auckland, who had been Chief Secretary during the period closely preceding the Portland régime in 1782, and who knew his country, immediately recognised that it was simply a scheme for getting the patronage of Ireland back into the hands of the insatiable Ponsonby. "The Portland set," he pointed out, "are absorbed in the old and sleepy game of patronage, in the pursuit of which they are at this instant risking the convulsion of Ireland." It is, it may be admitted, a little strange that Pitt, having made his position so clear, should have allowed this intrigue to go on for three or four months before putting his foot down. But affairs on the Continent were in a very critical stage just then and his time and anxious attention were, no doubt, fully occupied.

Fitzwilliam went over in January 1795 "under orders clearly understood by me," as he subsequently admitted, that the question of Catholic Emancipation should not be raised. And on arriving in Dublin he promptly placed himself in the hands of Grattan and the Ponsonbys, who were at the moment engaged in incessantly urging the Catholic claims. He had already threatened to get rid of

## FITZWILLIAM IN IRELAND

Fitzgibbon, who, whatever his faults, was the only really competent man for an emergency, and who was at that moment keeping track of Wolfe Tone and his United Irishmen and their treasonable correspondence with France. Knowing this, Pitt had peremptorily forbidden the dismissal of Fitzgibbon, but Fitzwilliam's first day's work in Ireland was to dismiss Beresford, who was Fitzgibbon's right-hand man, and whose offence it was to be a member of a family claiming to rival the Ponsonbys in attachment to offices and emoluments. Several minor dismissals followed and it was evident that so far as possible there was to be a clean sweep of all who had stood by Pitt and Fitzgibbon in the Regency crisis. Fitzgibbon and the Beresfords had no doubt carried matters with a high hand since Leinster and Ponsonby had been dismissed from their sinecures for acting as Fox's agents in Ireland on the Regency dispute. That was the way with the "aristocratic factions" in Ireland, and if that had been all no great harm would have been done.

But more was at issue. These men were being punished by Pitt's Viceroy for supporting Pitt at a grave crisis when his whole political existence was at stake. Even a milder Prime Minister would not have stood that. And in addition the Catholic question was now in full blaze : the Catholic Committee had been revived, and Fitzwilliam himself seems to have grown alarmed at the agitation of the question which he had pledged himself to keep in the background. To suggest that Pitt was opposed to the Catholic claims is absurd. We have already seen him forcing attention to those claims on the reluctant Irish Government on two separate occasions, and six years later he resigned office at the height of his fame because his colleagues would not

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

join him in forcing the matter to a final issue. What he objected to was insubordination and the throwing back of the country into the hands of the greedy and hostile clique from whom it had been rescued with so much difficulty. Above all he objected to weakening the hands of the Irish Government at a moment when rebellion and invasion were threatened.

But Pitt had no wish to quarrel with Portland if he could help it. On February 9 he wrote an expostulatory letter to Fitzwilliam about his conduct. On the 16th Portland wrote reinforcing Pitt's remonstrance and enjoining caution. Fitzwilliam replied argumentatively and he was promptly recalled. Much ink has been spilt over this episode, which has gained additional importance as being practically the prelude to the Rebellion of 1798 and the Union. Mr. Lecky devotes the greater part of a volume to republishing the documentary evidence. Lord Rosebery disposes of it in a dozen sparkling pages, and we fancy the reader will derive more enlightenment from the statesman than from the historian. "It is only necessary," remarks Lord Rosebery, "to produce one proof that Pitt was in the right, though others are not wanting. All Fitzwilliam's friends in the Cabinet, who loved Fitzwilliam, who disliked and distrusted Pitt, who had entered the Government reluctantly, and who would have embraced any fair opportunity of leaving it; who had indeed been on the brink of resignation with regard to Irish affairs three months before—all these men—Portland and Windham, Spencer and Loughborough, three of them men of the nicest honour, and cognisant of the entire chain of agreements and events, all unhesitatingly took the part of Pitt against Fitzwilliam. Who,

## FITZWILLIAM RECALLED

indeed, was the Minister who, having obtained special responsibility for Ireland by the threat of resignation now recalled Fitzwilliam? Who but Portland, himself Fitzwilliam's political chief and friend? In that very letter to Grattan, which has been mentioned, of the 23rd August, 1794, Fitzwilliam says: 'I shall look to the system of the Duke of Portland as the model by which I shall regulate the general line of my conduct.' Portland's lethargy had been blamable in the earlier stages of the transaction. But he showed none now. This is a circumstance which appears to bar further controversy. From the mouths of four unquestioning and unwilling witnesses it establishes Pitt's good faith, and the fact that the mistake lay with Fitzwilliam."

The unhappy events that followed the Fitzwilliam episode have as has been stated lent it a significance far beyond its intrinsic importance. The Parliamentary leaders, ridiculed and despised by the United Irishmen, who were the real and vital force of resistance in the country, eagerly snatched at it in order to attach a little honour and glory to themselves as the champions of freedom and emancipation. But to the United Irishmen it did not matter a row of pins whether the Beresfords or the Ponsonbys had the handling of the public funds. The evidence of those leading members of the conspiracy, who later on followed Wolfe Tone's example and made a clean breast of it to the authorities, is unanimous in proving that at this stage they were quite indifferent to reform and were working solely for revolution. Thomas Addis Emmet declared before the Secret Committee that "the mass of the people did not care 'the value of a drop of ink' for Catholic emancipation," and

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MacNevin said that the importance of the subject had "passed away long since ; it really is not worth a moment's thought at the present period." Your true Jacobin, indeed, always has a supreme contempt for votes. The "organised will of society," with power to say, "be my brother or I will kill thee," is his ideal. To attempt then to represent the rising of 1798 as due to the refusal of Catholic emancipation in 1795 is to strain the credulity of the public a little too far. It was the political prelude to it, and it was used by the politicians to feed the flame. That is all.

Fitzwilliam himself, it may be added, gives no countenance to the legend that would make Catholic emancipation the turning-point of the incident or the cause of his recall. He knew, none better, that the whole struggle was between two parties for mastery at the Castle and on College Green. "Let my friends," he wrote to Carlisle, "no longer suffer the Catholic question to be mentioned as entering in the most distant degree into the causes of my recall. Had Mr. Beresford never been dismissed I should have remained." And if corroboration were needed we find it in George Ponsonby's words in Parliament : "In my opinion, the Catholic question had no more to do with the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam than Lord Macartney's Embassy to China." Pitt was fully occupied in Downing Street, and he wanted a trustworthy hand at the helm in Ireland. He never liked Fitzgibbon and had forced him to bend in 1792-93. But he knew a strong man when he met him, and he could always subordinate his private likes and dislikes to the interests of the public service.

One permanently bad effect the Fitzwilliam affair certainly had. It postponed Emancipation for a

## GEORGE III. AND THE CATHOLICS

generation, and thus left a root of bitterness in Irish public life of whose evil fruit we have not yet seen the last. George III. was not originally hostile to Catholic relief, and the numerous Bills that gradually broke down the Penal Laws met with no opposition from him. In 1792 and 1793 he had approved important measures of relief and enfranchisement. In 1793 the Catholic delegates were specially struck with the gracious fashion in which he received their petition. "In these colloquies," writes Tone, "the matter is generally of little interest, the manner is all; and with the manner of the Sovereign the delegates had every reason to be content." But George III. was a born intriguer, and was abnormally suspicious and obstinate as such men usually are. Fitzgibbon had by this time established communications with high officials in England, and was not over scrupulous as to the means he used. Since his mental breakdown and the attempt to snatch the crown from him, the King not unnaturally had a dread and hatred of the Irish Whigs, only second to that which he entertained for Fox. And now when it was represented to him that the old intriguers were at work again his suspicions were aroused almost to the point of insanity. To grant Catholic Emancipation in the form now suggested would, he was assured, be a violation of his Coronation Oath, of the Act of Settlement, and of the Act of Union with Scotland. Fitzgibbon even went so far as to say, and Westmorland who had his own grievance backed him up, that the English Chancellor would "stake his head" if as Keeper of the King's Conscience he allowed such a measure to pass under the Great Seal.

The result of all this on a mind like the King's

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

was easy to foresee. Trickery there undoubtedly was, for Grattan and Ponsonby were announcing things in Ireland which had never been decided by the Ministry, and which in any case, in the King's opinion, depended largely on the decision of the monarch himself. So that not only did the Fitz-william-Ponsonby intrigue fail for the moment as it deserved to fail, but it left what Lord Rosebery calls "a sunken rock" in the way of Catholic relief so long as King George lived. That is the rock on which Pitt struck in 1801. The Union policy was left half developed and half finished because no earthly power could move the King to consent to Catholic Emancipation which Pitt and Castlereagh, as we shall see, intended to be an essential feature of that policy. It was the King and the King alone who blocked it, and he blocked it in 1801 largely because of the impression left on his mind by the events of 1795.

In the north too there was trouble in 1795, and trouble that has left a deep mark. Wolfe Tone had been preaching the United Irish doctrine in Ulster for four or five years and in the towns he had made progress, but in the frontier districts, where the two races and creeds came into contact and competition, they were still unconvinced and showed themselves as little in accord as ever. Peep-o'-day boy and Defender still spilt each other's blood at due seasons on the smallest provocation. The old agrarian grievance was again at work, and bands of Peep-o'-day boys now went through the country systematically wrecking the houses of Catholic farmers, with the cry, "To Connaught or to hell with you." "Of late," wrote Lord Gosford to the Chief Secretary from County Armagh, "no night passes that houses are not destroyed and scarce

## THE FIRST "ORANGE" LODGE

a week that some dreadful murders are not committed. Nothing can exceed the animosity between Protestants and Catholics at this moment in this county." The Protestant and Catholic inhabitants, he added, were inflamed to the highest pitch of animosity, but the former were greatly superior in strength and made no scruple of declaring "both by words and actions that could not be misunderstood, a fixed intention to exterminate their opponents."

The Defenders on their part were not idle, and as in those days there were no regular police, their "battles" were often fought out in open day and resulted in much bloodshed and many deaths. One of these conflicts, more serious than usual, took place in September 1795 at a village called The Diamond, in County Armagh. The Defenders, who appear to have been the assailants, were driven off leaving a considerable number dead on the field. The Protestant party assembled in the evening and then and there, as the story goes, the first Orange Lodge was formed. As a matter of fact, there had already been many "Orange" Lodges, probably Masonic in their nature, and the early Volunteers were accustomed to celebrate the first (or twelfth) of July in honour of William of Orange and the Battle of the Boyne. So there was nothing new either in the name or in the organisation. What probably happened is that from this date Orange Lodges of a specifically militant nature were formed in the fighting districts and rapidly grew into a great organisation banded together for mutual assistance and support. Being to some extent agrarian in their character they were at first frowned on by the landlords and magistrates, but in the troubled times that followed the author-

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

ities—General Lake being the first—recognised their value as a fighting force and they became a permanent and recognised association, particularly strong it was said in the militia and yeomanry regiments then being organised in the north in preparation for rebellion or invasion.

## CHAPTER X

### THE REBELLION OF 1798

EVENTS were now rapidly moving towards the catastrophe. Fitzwilliam was recalled in February 1795. Jackson, the apostle and the victim of the conspiracy for a French invasion, was convicted in April. Tone, whose complicity was known to Fitzgibbon, sailed for America in May and arrived back in France in February 1796. And the Orange Society had been formed in September 1795. Camden and Pelham, the new Viceroy and Chief Secretary, were men of no great weight, and the gentlemen on College Green still kept on talking, but the real history of the country was being made elsewhere. The Defenders and the United Irishmen, who were now avowedly rebellious, joined forces and worked under the orders of a Secret Committee of Public Welfare, reported to consist of only five members, and having, according to the terrified Lord Camden, no less than a million sworn members. They may have amounted all told to one hundred thousand, but figures grow in Ireland when the pay of the informer depends on the magnitude of his story, and when officials are foolish enough to believe them. Tone knew better and his first report to the French Executive was that the Irish could not be depended upon to rise and that "most certainly" nothing could be done by their spontaneous efforts. If an army of 20,000 men were landed in Ireland they might, he said, in a month collect 100,000

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

men or more. Tone evidently knew nothing of Camden's "million" men in buckram. It was probably Tone's habit of telling the truth in such matters that impressed the French officials, disgusted with the bragging of the other delegates. Twice in 1795 did Camden report terrible and imminent risings that were to sweep the country, whilst those who were trying to carry on Tone's work knew as well as their leader did that not a man would stir against the Government without French assistance.

Parliament met again in January 1796 and took in hand an Insurrection Bill and an Assassination Bill—Coercion Acts of the utmost severity being a standing dish in "Grattan's Parliament." Both remained, like their predecessors, "an absolute dead-letter," the local authorities having neither the courage nor the capacity to carry them into effect. Fitzgibbon, in the Castle, was weaving webs for the capture of the United Irishmen ; Tone was in Paris carrying on his negotiations with the French Government for an invasion in force ; for the rest, the country was pretty well left to govern itself. There were plenty of soldiery of a kind—Fencibles, yeomanry, and militia—but they were distributed on no strategical plan. The landowner with the greatest "pull" in Dublin got soldiers to do police duty in his district and there, with no proper discipline or training, they rapidly deteriorated into a turbulent rabble, "formidable," as Sir Ralph Abercromby said when he became commander-in-chief, "to every one but the enemy."

If ever a country was ripe for revolution it was Ireland. The Parliament was held in universal contempt ; the people were oppressed, turbulent, and half starving ; the whole system of Govern-

## WOLFE TONE IN PARIS

ment was, as it had been for a century, corrupt and incompetent. Fitzgibbon had no idea for coping with the conspiracy beyond the trapping of rebels of every degree and opposition to reform in any guise. If he had had efficient underlings he might have made something better of the situation. As things were, it was murder and outrage on the one hand and ferocious and lawless repression on the other. During Fitzwilliam's short and inglorious reign he could say that "not a day has passed since my arrival without intelligence received of violence committed in Westmeath, Meath, Longford, and Cavan." The soldiery could sweep a district but they could give no permanent protection. The Viceroy states an instance : "An outrage is committed. Government sends a military force to animate the magistrates ; they act under that protection ; the outrage is put an end to ; all appears submission ; the military retire, and the house, life, and family of the magistrate instantly pays the penalty of his activity." And after the Fitzwilliam fiasco matters naturally went from bad to worse.

Tone in Paris bent all his energies to his one hope—the French Directory. He would waste no more time on the Dublin "stalwarts," who would run before a sergeant's guard. Without anything like systematic backing from Ireland, without money, with little or no French, this wonderful youth pushed and pushed till at last he gained access to Carnot himself, the "organiser of victory," then the most important man in France. "Here I am," he writes, "with exactly two louis in my exchequer, negotiating with the French Government and planning revolutions." And after his interview with Carnot, that austere republican

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

being dressed in white satin with a crimson robe—Tone never misses such details—he makes this entry : “ I am a pretty fellow to negotiate with the Directory of France, pull down a monarchy, and establish a republic ; to break a connection of six hundred years’ standing and contract a fresh alliance with another country. What would my old friend Fitzgibbon say ? ‘ He called me dog before he had a cause.’ I remember he used to say that I was a viper in the bosom of Ireland. Now that I am in Paris I will venture to say that he lies and that I am a better Irishman than he and his whole gang of rascals ; as well as the gang who are opposing him *as it were.*” This specially underlined reference to the sham opposition in the Irish Parliament is eloquent as to the contempt felt by Tone for Grattan and his speech-making friends.

The United Irishmen—who, in Paris at least, were never united but always squabbling—were meanwhile doing their best to make their own cause hopeless. It was at this juncture that Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Arthur O’Connor formally took the oath and joined the conspiracy. Being aristocrats they were made much of by the staunch democrats of Dublin, and they took little account of what had been done, and was doing by Tone even if they had heard of it, which is doubtful. In fact, they set about everything afresh and in their own way. Lord Edward and O’Connor were appointed ambassadors and set out for Paris to take charge of negotiations. This was the beginning of a dual system that led to much bad feeling between various “ambassadors,” each claiming to be the real oracle. At an interview with Talleyrand in March 1798 Tone “took the opportunity to tell

## LORD EDWARD FITZGERALD

him that Lewines and I, as is the fact, were exposed to some little dirty intrigues here. . . . Poor Lewines and I have been tormented latterly with dirty cabals and factions which I scorn to commit to paper. . . . I hate such pitiful work, and am heartily glad I am getting off to the army where I shall be out of reach of it. If I would dirty my paper with them I could record some anecdotes which are curious enough were it only for their singular meanness." As Napoleon said afterwards of the Irish emissaries whom he knew : "Ils étaient divisés d'opinion, et se querellaient continuellement entre eux."<sup>\*</sup> It was only after his interviews with the others, by the way, that Tone first heard of Napoleon. On April 25 he speaks of the victories at Montenotte and Millesimo, and adds, "the French General is Buonaparte, a Corsican." He met him later and created a good impression, but Napoleon's eyes were always turned to the East and away from Ireland.<sup>†</sup> And when irreparable failure comes at the end Tone attributes it "to the influences and prejudices of General Buonaparte, the prime cause of the failure of the third expedition for the liberation of Ireland."

All through 1796 Tone pressed his cause on the French authorities. His "Memorials" to the Directory have been preserved, and they display considerable practical ability with a refreshing

\* Correspondence, xxxii. 328.

† Napoleon himself regretted his tactics at this period. "On what," he said, "do the destinies of Empires hang ! If instead of the expedition to Egypt, I had made that of Ireland, if slight diverging circumstances had not thrown obstacles in the way of my Boulogne enterprise what would England have been to-day ? and the Continent ? and the political world ?" ("Las Cases, Mémoires de Sainte Hélène," ii. p. 335, quoted by Mr. Lecky.)

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

absence of rhetoric. He depends for a rising on two elements in the population. The Catholics he estimates at 3,150,000. They are, he says, "strong in misery, which makes man bold," and their eyes are "fixed most earnestly on France." As Defenders they are "completely organised on a military plan," but he says nothing of their fighting qualities. Without a French army they were useless. Both as conspirators and as fighters his confidence is placed in the Scotch Presbyterians in the north, who, he says, are "sincere and enlightened republicans," and their province "the most populous, the most warlike, and the most informed quarter of the nation." These Ulster Presbyterians, he adds, "would make perhaps the best soldiers in Ireland." Formerly, he explains, they had "ranged themselves under the standard of England and were the most formidable enemies to the Catholic natives, whom they detested as Papists and despised as slaves," but now "eager to emulate the glorious example of France, they saw at once that the only guide to liberty was justice," and therefore he says they had joined hands with the rest of Ireland in order to propagate the principles of the French Revolution.

Here was Tone's weak point, as he and his friend Russell discovered to their cost later on. Ulster had been decidedly Republican so long as there were examples like those of Washington and Hamilton to follow. The French Revolution, with its exhibition of the "red fool-fury of the Seine," drove large numbers of the well-to-do and intelligent into the moderate camp, and the Orange movement—of which Tone at that time probably knew little or nothing—showed that the large majority of the "warlike" democracy had gone

## HOCHE'S EXPEDITION

back to their old anti-Papal standpoint, and would fight when the time came, against and not for the revolutionary insurgents. It is also interesting to note that in his report regarding the numbers of these northerners, on whom he so much relied, Tone for the first time falsifies the figures. He says that there were 450,000 "Protestants" and 900,000 "Dissenters," whereas he must have well known that there were hardly half that number.

However, this Memorial had its effect, and Tone, as the autumn came on, found himself appointed *Chef de Brigade* to General Hoche, who was to command the army of Ireland. This provided him for the first time with a salary and an object, and his spirits and his hopes went up accordingly. The expedition was to fit out at Brest, and thence after delays that seemed interminable he set sail on December 16, 1796, with a fleet of seventeen sail of the line, thirteen frigates, seven corvettes, some smaller vessels, and six transports carrying 15,000 of the *elite* of the French troops under the command of Hoche, a general at that time regarded as not second even to Buonaparte in daring and renown. But Fitzgibbon had struck first. He could not command fleets or armies. The Lords of the Admiralty in their wisdom left the field open for Hoche, although his expedition had been six months in preparation at one of the most frequented ports in France. Fitzgibbon, however, was well served by his spies and informers, and on September 16 he suddenly closed the net on the leaders of the United Irishmen in Dublin and Belfast, and before nightfall the whole movement was left without guidance or command. "It is impossible to conceive," writes Tone, "the effect this heavy misfortune has upon my mind. If we are not in

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

Ireland time enough to extricate them they are gone!"

Hoche's expedition met with varying fortunes. It did not encounter a single British war vessel, and so had only to fear the weather and there it was unlucky, although hardly more so than might have been expected in such a sea in mid-winter. One of the transports was lost on the first night. The fleet was scattered and never completely reformed, Hoche not being seen again till the survivors were back in France. At last the bulk of the expedition was collected off the Irish coast, but Hoche was still missing, and Grouchy, his second in command, was timid and hesitating and would do nothing on his own responsibility. This was on December 21. If Grouchy had made a bold landing on that day either at Cork or Kinsale, there can be little doubt, from what we know of the utter unpreparedness and incompetence of those on shore, that Ireland would for the time have fallen into French hands. A couple of years later, with the country stunned into submission and held by a strong garrison of regular troops under Cornwallis and Lake, General Humbert landed at Killala with only one thousand men and was able to hold his own and traverse half a province before he was surrounded and captured. What could not Hoche and Grouchy have accomplished with fifteen thousand picked men, raising and arming the people as they went along? The country would, no doubt, have been won back by England, but only after a devastating war recalling in its incidents and effects those of Elizabeth and of Cromwell.

On the 22nd the fleet was in Bantry Bay, but the soldiers made no attempt to land and the

## HOCHE AND GROUCHY

inhabitants showed no signs of rising. After several ignominious days of idleness the wind began to blow, and the great fleet turned tail and made its way back to France. Hoche and his armada had failed, it was true, but Ireland and the Empire had had a narrow escape. Neither the British fleet nor the British army had contributed to the failure of the French. If the commander of the invading force had displayed a shadow of pluck or resource he would have been successful. "I should not deserve the confidence with which I am honoured," wrote Camden to Portland—deep calling unto deep—"if I did not apprise you that a universal discontent prevails here that a hostile fleet should have presumed to have insulted our coast for three weeks. They argue that a descent was to have been expected. They feel their situation much less tranquil if the French may think their fleet has been here so long unmolested by that of Great Britain."

Tone's diary at this point shows how he felt the blow: "So, all is over! It is hard after having forced my way thus far to be obliged to turn back; but it is my fate and I must submit. England has not had such an escape since the Spanish Armada, and that expedition like ours, was defeated by the weather: the elements fight against us, and courage here is of no avail. Well, let me think no more about it. It is lost and let it go." And four days later: "On our way to Brest. It will be supposed I am in no great humour to make memorandums. This is the last day of the year 1796, which has been a very remarkable one in my history." And here we may take leave of Wolfe Tone. His part had been played. Two years later he again attempted a landing, was captured, and died by his own hand

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

in the condemned cell rather than face the gallows. Fitzgibbon had won the game, and it was well for Ireland and for the world that it was so. But Tone was not an unworthy opponent. "Brave, adventurous, sanguine, fertile in resource, buoyant under misfortune," says Goldwin Smith, "he was near being as fatal an enemy to England as Hannibal was to Rome."

The year 1797 opened badly. It was clear that the decisive crisis could not be long delayed. What the French had done they might do again—and have better luck. No one had any confidence in Dublin Castle, and things throughout the country continued to go from bad to worse. Deprived of their leaders the United Irishmen seem to have carried on a sort of guerilla warfare. Camden reported that in the north murders were "outrageous and systematic." Fermanagh, Louth, Kildare, and Mayo were no better, "and, if effectual means are not taken to stop it, the north will not be the only part of this kingdom in a state little short of rebellion." Carhampton, with his militia and yeomen, had already put Connaught under the harrow and had committed so many illegalities that he had to fall back on an Act of Indemnity. On March 13, Lake, in command of the Northern District, issued a proclamation in which he spoke of the "daring and horrid outrages" perpetrated in many parts of Ulster "with a view to supersede the laws and the administration of justice by an organised system of murder and robbery." In view of this, he ordered a general disarmament, followed by a forcible search for concealed arms, a process no doubt absolutely necessary as a military measure, but one which in the hands of undisciplined or partisan troops may be made the occasion of

## GRATTAN RETIRES

almost unlimited barbarity—floggings, “ roastings,” and “ half hangings,” being the most usual.

As if to mark more completely how the old was giving way to the new, 1797 was the year when Grattan retired and Burke died. Grattan, needless to repeat, was not a Jacobin. He probably shared Burke’s views regarding events in France and their influence on Ireland, but the weakness of his character induced him to go much further than Burke before he drew back. “ If I shall live much longer,” wrote Burke, “ I shall see an end of all that is worth living for in this world.” He could not bring himself to support Pitt’s Government to the full either in England or in Ireland, but his abhorrence of the attitude of the Opposition was still greater. “ The Opposition in that country as well as in this,” he went on, “ is running the whole course of Jacobinism.” Ireland was heading for separation, but what would be the result? “ Great Britain would be ruined by the separation of Ireland, but as there are degrees even in ruin it would fall the most heavily on Ireland. By such a separation Ireland would be the most completely undone country in the world: the most wretched, the most distracted, and in the end the most desolate part of the habitable globe.” Burke did not pronounce the word Union, but it would seem as if in that sentence he was pondering on the inevitable alternative that later presented itself to his biographer\* “ either independence or Union.”

Grattan, whose following had now sunk to sixteen,—at times he could not even find a seconder in the House—retired from politics because, as he said in the debate on the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in 1796, “ I see a gulf before me from whose

\* See p. 191.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

abyss I recoil." He could not oppose measures which he knew to be necessary, but he could not bow the knee to Fitzgibbon, and so he incurred the fate that always lies in wait for the man of words, confronted with a grave emergency. He retired for the time from public life, and he admitted later on that his error was in not having seceded sooner, "for the Opposition, I fear, encouraged the United Men by their speeches against the Government!" It is a pity for the sake of his own credit and character that Grattan had not thought of that earlier. But he was reluctant to have to admit that his cherished Constitution had hopelessly broken down as a means of governing Ireland in a serious emergency. Late in the same year Robert Stewart, who by his father's promotion had now become Lord Castlereagh, entered official life as Keeper of the Privy Seal under Lord Camden. During a great part of the year he was serving with his militia regiment, and his correspondence does not show any official connection with Dublin Castle till March 1798.

It was now simply a question of whether the country could be disarmed and "pacified" before the next French invasion was due. Hoche had been preparing another expedition in the Texel, France using the Dutch coast and fleet as her own, but Hoche died in September and in October Duncan destroyed the Dutch fleet off Camperdown. So the immediate danger from abroad was over and the systematic disarming of the country went on. Two inconsistent charges are made against the Government for their action in this period of suspense before the outbreak. The first is that there was no real intention or desire to rebel, and that the Government were driving a peaceful

## THE REBELLION

people, innocent of conspiracy or crime, into rebellion in order to secure a pretext for the Union ; the other is that there was a widespread and well-organised conspiracy, but that the Government knew all about it, and the names of the leaders, and could therefore if they had wished have nipped the rebellion in the bud. To this it may be answered that it is impossible to be strictly logical in dealing with a desperate situation, and that at any rate both charges cannot be just. The Government had already seized the chief leaders and there had been no cessation in the movement. And although the fact has never been disputed that every one of the men arrested was deep in the conspiracy the evidence producible in court was so slight that the majority of them were never proceeded against judicially, but simply detained in custody till the insurrection was over. As for the charge of hastening the rebellion, the facts speak for themselves. The Government knew that there was an organisation on military lines whose members had sworn a treasonable oath, and professed themselves willing to rise as soon as a French landing had been effected. Is there any Government under the sun which under such circumstances would leave to its enemies the choice of time and place for striking the first blow ? Certainly not the Republican Government of France in the case of La Vendée or in any other turbulent province or kingdom. Knowing as they did that the allies were arranging that she should fight them together, was Great Britain much to be blamed for deciding that she for her part would prefer to fight them separately ?

It is fortunately not necessary here to detail the occurrences of the Irish Rebellion in the summer of 1798. Assuming that the Government planned

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

to fight its enemies separately it was certainly successful, for alike in Wexford and in Antrim and Down the rising was at an end before the French could move, whilst the bulk of the country gave no trouble. The rebel "armies" were simply unorganised mobs, without trained leaders or proper arms or discipline, and the whole affair possesses neither political nor strategical interest. In Ulster the bulk of the "United" men were tired of their Jacobin frenzy long before the rebellion and the muster was a poor one alike in quantity and in quality. Regular soldiers were not required, except a few dragoons, and it was not the least of the grievances of the Antrim rebels that when they turned out to proclaim the Universal Revolution, it was the Monaghan Militia and the Belfast Yeomen who shot them down and captured their brass gun. At Ballynahinch also, where the [insurgents'] last stand in Down was made a few days later, it was again the Monaghan Militia and the Yeomen, cavalry and infantry, reinforced on this occasion by the Fifeshire Fencibles and the 22nd Light Dragoons, who met and dispersed them.

In the south the rebellion was more serious and more determined in character because there the great animating motive was to right the wrongs of centuries by a rising of the people against their "Saxon" conquerors. Racial and religious hatred were the real forces at work, not abstract ideas about the brotherhood of the human race. In Wexford the fighting occupied several weeks, and the rebels developed some capable guerilla leaders, including one or two priests, but the struggle soon degenerated into a savage civil war, marked on both sides by shocking cruelties. Camden and Pelham were helpless, and Fitzgibbon and Foster seem to have taken

## CAMDEN'S WEAKNESS

delight in urging the militia and yeomanry to fresh exploits even where no opposition was offered. Sir Ralph Abercrombie had succeeded Carhampton as commander-in-chief, and he had, as his Brigadier, General Moore, afterwards famous as Sir John Moore of Corunna. From these two we derive much impartial information as to the occurrences of this terrible summer in the south.

Abercrombie did not remain long, and was in hot water from the first. The new commander-in-chief was a soldier of experience and authority, and he insisted on having all the troops concentrated under his direct command. The Castle objected to this because, as we have seen, it was more convenient to have the troops scattered all over the country doing police duty for local magnates. Abercrombie pointed out that this was not the normal duty of soldiers, and that the man who himself did the least and cried out the most got the most protection. "The country gentlemen and magistrates," he said, going back on an old and fundamental weakness, "do not do their duty; they are timid and distrustful and ruin the troops by calling upon them on every occasion to execute the law and to afford them personal protection."

. . . It would be very desirable if the troops could without alarming the gentlemen be collected and their discipline restored, which suffers exceedingly from their dispersed state. . . . This dispersed state of the troops is really ruinous to the service. The best regiments in Europe could not long stand such usage."

This was bad enough, for the suggestion that the public interest should no longer be subordinated to personal and individual interests was a revolutionary one in Ireland. But worse was to come.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

Abercrombie having collected a body of troops into something like an active force in anticipation of the rebellion found that they were lacking in everything that should constitute an army, and issued general orders (February 25, 1798) calling attention to the "disgraceful frequency of court-martials," and to the "many complaints of irregularities," and declaring roundly that these things "proved the army to be in a state of licentiousness which must render it formidable to every one but the enemy." And he called on all commanding officers to "compel" from officers under their command such discipline "as may restore the high and distinguished reputation which British troops have been accustomed to enjoy in every part of the world." Pelham admitted that Abercrombie was right and that the discipline of the army had been steadily declining, for the very reasons stated. But Fitzgibbon (whom we must now learn to call by his new title, Lord Clare) and Speaker Foster were all the more furious, for they had, in Parliament, been steadily and without qualification denying the very charges which they and Abercrombie both knew to be true. Sir Ralph, who was in constant communication with Moore, told his Brigadier that Camden was "one of the best men in the world but one of the weakest," that he (Camden) agreed with all Abercrombie said, but would do nothing without the permission of the Chancellor. So Sir Ralph promptly asked to be recalled.

Even more valuable as showing the state of rottenness into which things had fallen under Castle rule is the account given by Sir John Moore in his recently published diary.\* He was not writing

\* "The Diary of Sir John Moore," edited by General Maurice, 2 vols. 1904.

## CORK DEFENCELESS

angrily like Sir Ralph, or to justify himself, but was calmly jotting down things as one who had seen service half round the world, and merely for his own satisfaction. Moore accompanied Abercrombie to Ireland, arriving in Cork early in 1798. With his usual accuracy he notes at the outset the forces available, and by way of explanation, remarks that the Government had "armed a considerable part of the people under the heads of militia and yeomanry." Of regulars and fencibles there were, even on paper, only 18,000, and of militia and yeomanry some 56,000. It was the 18,000 of whose lack of discipline Sir Ralph complained. The militia and yeomanry could hardly be said to have any discipline at all.

Let it be remembered that little more than a year had passed since this very Cork district in which Moore was stationed had been for weeks at the mercy of an overwhelming force of the best troops in Europe, and had only escaped conquest by what might be called a special providence. Another such invasion was believed to be imminent and one would have imagined that anywhere but in Ireland, the interval would have been spent in feverish activity to improve the defences and prepare for the next raid, when providence might not be so kind. Yet Abercrombie and Moore found that nothing had been done. Some batteries, it is true, had been erected at Bantry, on the supposition that the enemy on arriving again would be obliging enough to present himself at precisely the same spot, but there were no troops to defend them. The harbour of Cork itself \* was, of course, the main

\* Over a quarter of a century before Lord Townshend had visited Cork and reported that the defences were useless; but nothing had been done.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

point, and there Sir Ralph found "every military preparation in a most defective state." "No artillery were in a condition to move; even the guns attached to the regiments were unprovided with horses. No magazines were formed for the militia regiments, little or no order or discipline, and the troops in general dispersed in small detachments for the protection of individuals. . . . The army has been considered little more than an instrument of corruption in the hands of the Lord-Lieutenant and his Secretary. . . . The mode which has been followed to quiet the disturbances in this country has been to proclaim the districts in which the people appeared to be the most violent and to let loose the military, who were encouraged in acts of great violence against all who were supposed to be disaffected."

A month later Moore writes: "It is melancholy to think that we have only the militia with which to encounter an enemy inured to war. When the militia were first formed had pains been taken to select proper officers and to introduce discipline they might by this time have been respectable troops; but like everything else in this country the giving of regiments was made an instrument of influence with the colonels, and they made their appointments to serve electioneering purposes. The officers are in general profligate and idle. . . . In the management of this country there appears to have been a great want of probity and talent. If there ever was a time when such an officer as a dictator was wanted it is the present. If a man of sufficient character and talent was to be found to fill it he might still save Ireland."

"Probity," "character," "talent"! What a green fool Moore's officers must have thought him to be

## A "DICTATOR" WANTED

to talk of such things as methods of advancement under the Irish Parliament. Impropriety and the misappropriation of public funds had for generations been raised to the level of a fine art. Every appointment from the highest to the lowest was a corrupt job. Two or three great families claimed their right to distribute and to share the plunder and if any Viceroy like Townshend had the capacity and the courage to attempt to check the scandal he was denounced by patriots of unimpeachable volatility as oppressors of the Irish "nation," enemies of its independence, and an opprobrium to humanity at large. Under such a system there was no room for probity or talent, the common people were driven to rebellion by want and oppression, and the forces which should have been ready to restore and maintain order were "formidable to every one but the enemy."

When the insurrection broke out in Wexford Moore received orders to march thither from Cork. On the first day's march his troops, mostly militia, were found to be "extremely undisciplined." "My whole time was taken up in attending to the Light Companies, instructing them in their duties and inciting the officers to exertions. The march from Cork was quite disgraceful." Even a fortnight later and after the men have smelt powder there is no improvement, mainly on account of drunkenness and incompetent officers. "The officers of every description are so bad that it is quite discouraging. Except that they are clothed with more uniformity the men are as ignorant and as much a rabble as those who have hitherto opposed us. Our army is better armed and provided with ammunition; that of the rebels has the advantage of zeal and ardour. If the rebellion continues or

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

if the French effect a landing even in inconsiderable numbers I shall consider the country lost, unless a very different system is adopted."

Lord Cornwallis succeeded Lord Camden as Lord-Lieutenant, with the office of commander-in-chief added to the Viceroyalty. When the main rising had been suppressed, Moore, who was promoted Major-General, went to Dublin to report, and received from Cornwallis a very free hand for pacifying Wicklow. One Garret Byrne came in and offered his influence. He had been a rebel general, and Moore found him "a shrewd man and well conducted . . . he acted fairly and did what he could." "He said that the cause for which he and others had risen was given up, and what remained was a murdering and pillaging business which he disapproved of as much as any man, since it was ruinous to the country. He would therefore use his influence to put a stop to it. The good conduct of the rooth Highlanders did much to reconciling the people and bringing them back to their habitations." Those who remained out were sharply followed up by Moore until at last they dispersed and threw away their arms and accepted the "protections" which were still held out to them. "They would have done this sooner," says Moore, "had it not been for the violence and atrocity of the yeomen, who shot many after they had received protections and burned houses and committed the most unpardonable acts. These, of course, shook faith in the Government, and lessened the confidence the people ought to have had in their protection. I was altogether three weeks in Wicklow during which the country was completely quieted and the inhabitants at their work. I told Lord Cornwallis that in my opinion the country would

## STATE OF THE COUNTRY

remain quiet if the gentlemen would return to their estates and treat the people with justice."

It would be childish at this time of day to join in the orgy of recrimination that accompanied and followed the Rebellion of 1798. To "attack" or to "defend" such a thing, as some writers have done, is as futile as to attack or to defend an earthquake. Once the French Revolution had begun to transform Europe, revolt was inevitable in Ireland. A great writer, in the chapter in which he touches his highest tragic note, speaks of the horrors of Paris under the Terror in words every one of which apply to Ireland in 1798 :\* "And yet there is not in France, with its rich variety of soil and climate, a blade, a leaf, a root, a sprig, a peppercorn, which will grow to maturity under conditions more certain than those that have produced this horror. Crush humanity out of shape once more, under similar hammers, and it will twist itself into the same tortured forms. Sow the same seed of rapacious licence and oppression over again, and it will surely yield the same fruit according to its kind."

Leaving out of account the old anarchic days of conquest—and there are worse things for a people than open war and bloodshed—it is the language of simple truth to say that for a century the English Government and the Colonial Parliament had systematically misgoverned the people entrusted to their charge. They had done the things they ought not to have done, and they had left undone the things they ought to have performed. They had neglected to abolish the sham Parliament, and to complete the Union at a time when it would have cost a minimum of trouble, and would have

\* Charles Dickens, "A Tale of Two Cities," chap. xv.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

done a maximum of good. They had devised a code of persecution which, if not the cruellest, was probably the meanest ever inflicted on a helpless people. They had driven out the leaders and the chiefs to foreign service, and they had ground into the mire the common people who remained. They had bled agriculture by their exactions—the exactions of “the deputies of deputies of deputies,”—and they had crushed industry. They had spouted claptrap about their own liberties and privileges in Parliament, and they had outraged the liberties and the privileges of the serfs by whose exertions they lived. And then they complained that the people were lacking in industry, in honesty and self-respect, in loyalty to their Government and in admiration for their Parliament!

It is noteworthy that when the rebellion was suppressed and the danger over the cry for revenge grew louder amongst those whose neglect and oppression were mainly responsible for the rising. The disorderly and incompetent yeomen and “supplementaries,” of whom we have heard from General Moore, were then in their glory. The cautious and accurate Protestant historian, Gordon, found reason to believe that “more men than fell in battle were slain in cold blood.” Moore’s account of his pacification of Wicklow is an example of what should have been done generally, but the more usual course was to let the men loose on the country to kill, burn, and destroy as seemed good to them. The arrival of Cornwallis as commander-in-chief and Viceroy was the first check on this conduct, and the victors soon began to cry out against him almost as loudly as they did against Sir Ralph Abercrombie. Yeomanry colonels, sending in vainglorious accounts of their Falstaffian

## MISERABLE AND DESOLATE

victories, and of the numbers of rebels slain, did not like to find such a note appended to them as this : “ These accounts are, I conclude, greatly exaggerated. From my own knowledge of military affairs I am assured that a very small proportion of them only could be killed in battle : I am very much afraid that any man in a brown coat who is found within several miles of the field of action is butchered without discrimination.”

A few weeks of this bloody work completed the ruin which the actual rebellion had begun. Mr. Lecky who is not often provoked into vehemence says simply : “ Agriculture had ceased. Its implements were destroyed. The sheep and cattle had been plundered and slaughtered. The farmers were homeless, ruined and often starving. Misgovernment and corruption, political agitation, and political conspiracy, had done their work, and a great part of Ireland was as miserable and desolate as any part of the habitual globe.” But the men of the Dublin Parliament cared nothing for all this. They only wanted still more bloodshed. “ The violence of your friends,” said Cornwallis, “ added to the ferocity of our troops, who delight in murder, most powerfully counteract all plans of conciliation ! ” The politicians were “ absurdly violent,” the Chancellor being “ by far the most moderate and right-headed.” Blood, even to the point of “ extirpation,” was called for, and every respite conceded by Cornwallis and his advisers led to a fresh outcry. Cornwallis and Castlereagh (who now begins to come prominently into the direction of affairs in Dublin, owing to the illness and absence of Pelham) agreed to pardon several of the remaining prisoners on condition of their making a full revelation and quitting the country. One of Pelham’s

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

correspondents informs him that "the Speaker was frantic against it." This was, of course, Speaker Foster, whom ill-informed writers have held to be a sympathetic supporter of Irish national patriotism. He and Sir John Parnell, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, were the ablest opponents of the Union, and nothing shows more clearly the real nature of much of the opposition to that measure. It was the continuance of ascendancy, not the rights of nationalities that they advocated, and with the exception of Grattan, and perhaps half a dozen others, the same is true of the opposition in general. Mr. Alexander, another of Pelham's correspondents, tells us that Parnell was "even stronger for non-conciliation" than the Speaker, and to make the comedy complete Jonah Barrington mournfully declared that the true men of Ireland had been betrayed, and that "another class of men than loyalists seemed the Government's first care."<sup>\*</sup>

Cornwallis again and again rebuked this vengeful and murderous spirit, and in one case where a soldier, guilty of deliberate and cruel murder was promptly acquitted by a court-martial, he, as commander-in-chief, dissolved the court-martial with a severe censure and directed that the officers who had violated their oaths should not sit on a court-martial again. The country, he said on another occasion, instead of settling down was becoming more disturbed, and this he attributes to "the foolish violence of all the principal persons who have been in the habit of governing this island"—we have seen what the "foolish violence"

\* Here is another gem from Jonah : "Both sides had bled and were weak, and what was called the lenient system was adopted : the rebel was sent back to rob and to murder and to burn ; the yeoman and the loyalist were either insulted, oppressed, or degraded, and in some instances executed."

## THE SPIRIT OF REVENGE

of Foster and Parnell and Barrington was like—"and the Irish militia, from their repeated misbehaviour in the field, and their extreme licentiousness, are fallen into such universal contempt and abhorrence, that when applications are made for the protection of troops it is often requested that Irish militia may not be sent." In this case, at any rate, religious prejudice does not come in, for the creeds were pretty fairly balanced, the militia being mainly Catholic and the yeomanry Protestant. Cornwallis had already grown disgusted with his thankless and uncongenial task, although it was, as we shall see, nothing to what was to come. "The life of a Lord-Lieutenant," he says, "comes up to my idea of perfect misery : but if I can accomplish the great object of consolidating the British Empire, I shall be sufficiently repaid." For Cornwallis, like Pitt and like Castlereagh had become convinced that there was one essential remedy for Ireland's misgovernment, one that lay at the base of all the others, the one that had been so stupidly and clumsily rejected by England earlier in the century—an incorporating Union of the two Parliaments.

One touch, at the end, of that spirit of comedy which is never far distant from our direst tragedies. The Government had now on their hands a large batch of political prisoners from Belfast and Dublin, men of education and standing for the most part, whom they had decided to pardon, but did not quite know how to get rid of. They had, one and all, imbibed their principles from the founders of the great Republic of the West : The American flag had decked their banquets : The oratory of Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams had been their inspiration : They had, some of

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them (if Tone's diary is to be trusted), become very drunk in their desire to do honour to the healths of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. It was suggested that it would be a delicate and appropriate thing—since France, a country at war with the King, was barred to them—if they were sent to join their friends in America.

It was the Duke of Portland who made the friendly suggestion to Mr. Rufus King. But the American Minister's reply was as curt as it was inhospitable : “The principles and opinions of these men,” he wrote, “are, in my opinion, so dangerous, so false, so utterly inconsistent with any practical or stable form of Government, that I feel it to be a duty to my country to express to your Grace my earnest wishes that the United States may be exempted from the countries to which the Irish State Prisoners shall be permitted to retire.”

## CHAPTER XI

### LORD CASTLEREAGH AND THE UNION

CORNWALLIS' only consolation in the task of restraining the senseless cruelty of the leaders of the Irish Parliament was that he could do something for the "Great object" that Pitt now had in view. That legislative Union of the two countries which had been devised by the Long Parliament and carried into effect by Cromwell, which had been desired by Petty and by Molyneux, which had been prayed for by the Irish Parliament in 1703 and in 1707, which Archbishop King and Sir Richard Cox, Adam Smith and Montesquieu had advocated, was at last to be carried into effect. As usual there were conflicting interests. That the Oligarchy who "owned" the Parliament and made their living by it would oppose such a change was a matter of course. Speaker Foster and Sir John Parnell and Jonah Barrington would cry out against it as lustily as they had opposed the Catholic Relief Bill in 1793 and had abused Cornwallis and Castle-reagh in 1798 for their clemency.

Equally certain was it that the proposal would receive the strong support of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. All over the civilised world the Catholic Church was drawn together in horror at the progress of the Revolution, and the open rejoicings of leading Irish Revolutionaries at the treatment of the Pope by the French did not lessen their resentment and their dread. "The measure of the folly

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and wickedness of the Papal Government," wrote Tone, "was filled even to running over." And again, "I am heartily glad that old priest is at last laid under contribution in his turn. . . . The day of retribution is come at last, and I am strongly tempted to hope that this is but the beginning of his sorrows." He thought in fact that the whole "superstition" was passing away before philosophy "as the Mosaic Law subverted idolatry; as Christianity subverted the Jewish dispensation; as the Reformation subverted Popery." It is true that a handful of priests supported the Rebellion in Ireland, as they did the Revolution in France, but the Church\* was against them in each case. O'Connell represented the bulk of the well-to-do Catholics when he denounced the Revolution with horror and spoke of the men of 1798 as "miscreants" and "cut-throats." The Irish common people, were of course, ready to rise when properly excited and supported, as they had done in 1641, but certainly not in favour of the Revolution or of a Dublin Parliament, for which they cared nothing.

Of the Republicans of the Northern Colony it is more difficult to speak. They had been effectually cured of that magniloquent loquacity

\* Even till recent years the Church had not lost its dread of popular movements in Ireland. When Isaac Butt brought forward his Home Rule proposals they were frowned on by Cardinal Cullen. "I do not at all like," he said, "this new movement for what is called Home Rule, for of this I am convinced that the first future attack on the liberty of the Church and on the interest of religion will come from a native Parliament if we ever have one. . . . I am convinced that the moving spring in this new agitation in Ireland is identical with that in Italy, that is the spirit of the Revolution, so loudly and so authoritatively condemned by the Holy See. . . . We all know what the Revolution has done in Rome and in France."

## GRATTAN AND CLARE

with which their leaders had been afflicted since 1793 and the racial and religious form which the rebellion assumed in the south put an end once for all to their zeal for an Irish Republic in which from numerical necessity they would be permanently subjected to a people of whose doings they had now seen too much. Hamilton Rowan and Samuel Neilson, two of the leaders of the Belfast United Irishmen, both promptly declared in favour of the Union when it was proposed. Their quarrel was with the Irish Parliament, not with the British Constitution, under whose protection they were proud to find shelter.

What attitude would Grattan and Lord Clare take? Grattan had fallen on evil days. In his last division in the Irish Parliament his supporters had sunk to such a contemptible figure that, as already said, he retired from Parliament in disgust. Of his group it might almost be said, as Lord Acton tells us it was said of the French Doctrinaires a century before, that "they were only four but pretended to be five in order to strike terror by their number." A charge of treason, disgraceful only to its inventors, had been made against him: his name was struck from the Privy Council: the Corporation of Dublin removed his name from its list of freemen. He could scarcely appear without insult in the streets, and he went to England on the ground of ill health. But with desperate fidelity he stood by the Parliament which he had liberated from England, but which he could not liberate from itself or from its origin and surroundings.

Lord Clare was now very near the end of his career. He had warned the Irish Parliament that if it pressed its "privileges" too far it would bring about its own annihilation, for "England," he said,

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

“ is not easily aroused nor easily appeased : Ireland is easily roused and easily put down.” He had opposed Pitt stoutly on the question of the various measures of Catholic relief which England had forced on the Irish Parliament, and Pitt seems to have distrusted him—for good cause. If the King’s mind was set like a flint against Catholic Emancipation it was Clare’s doing. Clare helped Pitt to pass the Union, but who shall read his motives ? He knew that Pitt meant the Union simply as the prelude to Catholic Emancipation, and he himself was determined to oppose that measure by his old method of terrorising the King. As for the Union itself a strong argument in favour of his sincerity is to be found in his letters to Lord Auckland at the time, in which he states that he was converted to it in 1793, because after the Act of that year (which he had opposed) “ it was utterly impossible to preserve this country to the British Crown without it.” And with characteristic cynicism he warns his correspondent that it will not be an easy measure to carry, because of “ our strong national love of jobbing, which must receive a fatal blow in the ultimate success of the measure.” The men who lived by corruption would object strongly to seeing their means of livelihood destroyed. That and not the single-minded patriotism or the misplaced vanity of half a dozen honest men was the lion in the path.

The real fighter in the coming battle was to be a young man of whom comparatively little has been seen as yet in the Irish Parliament. Elected for County Down in 1790, when barely of age, Robert Stewart did not at first seem to take very kindly to Irish politics. His father and grandfather, representatives of a Donegal family of Scottish origin, had both sat in the Irish Parliament and

## LORD CASTLEREAGH

had purchased large estates in County Down. Robert Stewart the Elder was created in succession Baron, Earl and Marquis of Londonderry, and, in consequence, his son, in 1796, became Viscount Castlereagh. Till this time the Hills of Hillsborough had ruled the county, and the jealousy between their house and that of Londonderry played a considerable part in local politics during the next generation. So far as English party labels apply, the Hills stood for the old Tory or Ascendency party, and the Stewarts for the Whig or Presbyterian party. It is not surprising, therefore, that when Lord Castlereagh appeared as the Parliamentary champion of the Union Lord Downshire promptly espoused the opposite side. Young Stewart, as we have seen, was an original member of the Northern Whig Club, and took part in the Dungannon and Dublin Conventions, but he early became an ardent admirer of Pitt, whose ideas on almost all subjects he thenceforth shared. Charlemont, under whose auspices he to some extent entered public life, noticed and regretted this in a letter in which he says : "I cannot but love him, yet why is he so be-Pitted ? "

For a century the bulk of Irish political oratory has consisted of picturesque, flamboyant and highly imaginative abuse of Lord Castlereagh. There are welcome signs apparent on the horizon that a change is setting in and that the coming generation will endeavour to understand him and to ascertain the facts about a remarkable career. His connection with Irish official life is in reality very short, for although, as we have said, he entered Parliament in 1790, he held no office till that of Keeper of the Privy Seal in Ireland was conferred on him in 1797 by Lord Camden. It was a sinecure. It is not

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

likely that he saw much of official work till, in the following May, Pelham left Ireland, and a good deal of the Chief Secretary's work devolved on Castlereagh under Camden's direction. Lord Clare, however, still had most of the hard work on his shoulders, and he was not a man to invite assistance or interference. Castlereagh's serious work began when he was formally appointed Chief Secretary with the leadership of the Irish House of Commons in November of 1798, Cornwallis being then Lord-Lieutenant, and from that date till the Union was carried neither Viceroy nor Secretary had much repose of mind.

The task was not an easy one. Pitt and the King, Cornwallis and Castlereagh, had all come to the conclusion that there must once for all be an end of jobbery and corruption, and, further, that the only way to end it was to incorporate the Irish Parliament into the ranks of that sitting at Westminster, where the days of Walpole had passed into a legend and where business was now carried on in a more civilised and honest fashion, although, indeed, much was still lacking in that respect. Pitt was then engaged in war, but he had hopes of peace and even yet he had not abandoned his plans of Parliamentary, Commercial, and Financial reform and of Catholic Emancipation. This latter he desired specially for Ireland, but only on condition that it was linked with a legislative Union. Anything else, after what he had learnt of Ireland, would, he now recognised, be impossible.

The Catholics had got the vote, and yet they had no power. Grattan and other orators might imagine that this state of things could be continued indefinitely, an overwhelming majority of Catholic voters supporting Protestant ascendancy, but Pitt

## THE CATHOLIC QUESTION

as a practical statesman knew that it could not and that there was acute danger that the next wave of frenzy that convulsed the country might take the form of the election of a majority of Catholic nominees. The close boroughs could not last much longer and if the tenants once broke away from their landlords and voted for "popular" candidates the whole basis of Grattan's constitution was gone. On the other hand, the granting of complete emancipation after the Irish representation was merged in that of England and Scotland involved no such danger. The Catholics, as was their right, would have their due representation as part of a United Kingdom, in which all should ultimately have the same burdens and the same responsibilities. Best of all, the great reform would be granted once for all and on a definite principle, not as part of an obscure and crooked bargain in which the English Government, the Irish Privy Council, the Irish Parliament and the English Parliament might all be at cross purposes.

This particular point is of so much importance that it is well to anticipate a little and to examine the terms of a "most secret" memorandum on the Catholic question which Lord Castlereagh\* drew up shortly after the Union on resigning office along with Pitt when both were thwarted in their policy. It was probably meant for the King's eye and is couched in the most guarded and conciliatory language, objections and advantages being balanced against each other paragraph by paragraph. He discusses at the outset whether any "fundamental alteration of the Test Laws" is desirable at this time, and then asks whether it is probable "that the Protestants will either feel themselves enabled

\* Castlereagh Correspondence, iv. p. 392.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

or disposed to uphold against the Catholics for any number of years the present principle of Exclusion ; and, if not, whether it is wise when the world is at issue upon greater and more dangerous principles to retain the grounds of contest in their fullest extent, on which the State is at present committed against the whole body of the Catholics, supported in their pretensions by a great and growing proportion of the Protestants themselves. It is this latter consideration that seems almost to decide the question and if the concession is sooner or later to be made the state of the Catholic power on the Continent at this day (1801) does not seem to enjoin delay, whilst the nature of the political contest in which we are engaged makes it desirable, so far as we can, without essentially weakening the State, to get rid of sectarian struggles at home.”

All this may seem nowadays unduly reserved and guarded, but when we recollect the intensely suspicious and obstinate condition of the King’s mind on the subject we can only admire the writer’s mingled caution and clearness. He had the King and half the English Cabinet against him, he had Clare and Foster and the old Ascendancy party in Ireland against him, and it behoved him to walk delicately. He perhaps did not know that already in January the King had been irritated at the name of Castlereagh being thrust on him in connection with the question. “ What is it this young lord has brought over which they are going to throw at my head ? The most Jacobinical thing I ever heard of ! ”

After some further soothing generalities on the subject of the Reformation, the (Whig) Revolution and the Bill of Rights, Castlereagh again returns to the charge. “ Circumstances have since so far

## A GRAVE WARNING

altered as to induce a marked change of policy in the Government of that branch of the Empire where alone Catholic authority can afford any reasonable ground of jealousy to the State. Not only all restrictions on the industry of that sect and their means of acquiring property have been taken off, but important constitutional privileges have been extended to them in which the British Catholics have not been included. They now, therefore, are become a powerful body in the Empire, in number not less than three millions, growing fast into wealth and, of course, into local influence and already in possession of a considerable proportion of political consequence. The question then is, circumstanced as the Empire is in wealth and population, circumstanced as it is with relation to the Continent and united *as it now is* into one Kingdom, can you safely permit their numbers and their property to work their natural effects in the usual channels of the Constitution ? Can you continue them precisely in their present predicament, or have you the means of throwing them back to the point of depression they stood in at the commencement of the century ? ”

Was it, he went on to ask, a prudent thing that Ireland should be “ kept in a perpetual state of irritation and contest on a religious and constitutional question ? ” Was it not “ of all courses the worst ” to pursue “ a fluctuating and indefinite policy ? I own,” he goes on, “ I think the Union has afforded us the means of trying this experiment ” (complete emancipation and political equality) “ with less risk than seems to attach to an opposite line of conduct. . . . As far as the question affects the Catholics our error perhaps has hitherto been yielding piecemeal rather than upon system. In

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

leaving an obvious ground of struggle behind we have always encouraged demand rather than attained the end with which the concession has been made." If English statesmen had understood at that time and had promptly acted upon the principle involved in the last couple of sentences the history of Ireland in the nineteenth century would have been a widely different one.

And Lord Castlereagh uttered a serious warning —neglected like so many others. "Unless the power and stability of the United Government shall afford the means in safety of adopting some means of compromise among the contending factions, the difficulty of governing the country will rapidly increase as every year adds materially to the relative importance of the dissenting interests. If the same internal struggle continues Great Britain will derive little beyond an increase of expense from the Union. If she is to govern Ireland upon a 'garrison' principle, perhaps in abolishing the separate Parliament she has parted as well with her most effectual means as with her most perfect justification. In uniting with Ireland she has abdicated the colonial relation; and if hereafter that country is to prove a resource rather than a burden to Great Britain, an effort must be made to govern it through the public mind."

Being thus in possession of Lord Castlereagh's most intimate and fixed convictions as to the Union and the reforms that should accompany and complete it, we shall be better able to understand his policy in pressing it forward. It was a mixed and troubled time. Lord Clare and John Beresford—Lord Fitzwilliam's destined victim—were for the Union. Foster and Parnell and John Claudius Beresford were opposed to it. The Grand Orange Lodge was

## BISHOP PERCY AND THE UNION

by some means induced to remain neutral and thus prevent a united declaration, but the bulk of the country lodges in Ulster were decidedly against the Union. Saurin, too, a fanatical extremist, was against the Union, whilst Alderman James, a Dublin Orange leader, probably under the influence of Clare and Duigenan, persuaded himself that “a Union was the only means of preserving the Protestant State against the Irish Papists, and their English supporters”—a double-barrelled shot at Castlereagh and Pitt, for it was a peculiarity of the situation that some in Ireland, including Clare himself, were promoting the Bill in order to “shut the door for ever” on Pitt’s Emancipation Policy.

The gentle voice of Percy, Bishop of Dromore, not often heard in politics, was raised in favour of the Union, although his noisy neighbour, the Bishop of Down, strengthened by the shadow of Hillsborough Castle, was decidedly against it. Dublin and the Irish Bar, Percy admitted, were, for obvious and interested reasons, against it. “But,” to adopt Mr. Lecky’s summary, “he believed that in Cork, Waterford, and even Belfast, mercantile opinion was favourable to the measure; that the very expectation of it had already given a great spur to the linen manufacture; and that in the south many landed gentry, who had hitherto been strenuous advocates of the legislative independence of Ireland were so terrified by the scenes of carnage in Wexford, and by the dangers to which their lives and properties were exposed, that they would gladly, and indeed eagerly, accept protection under the shelter of an Union.” “But after all,” concluded the Bishop, “I fear we are not sufficiently enlightened to resist the narrow, bigoted outcries of

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the ignorant and the interested ; and the lawyers are overwhelming the world with publications, and the Dublin mob are rending the air with shouts against it."

This was the situation when at the beginning of 1799 the Duke of Portland formally authorised Lord Cornwallis to inform all whom it might concern that the King's Government had determined on the Union as " essential to the well-being of both countries and particularly to the peace and security of Ireland," that even in the event of present failure it would be renewed on every occasion until it succeeded ; and that " the conduct of individuals upon this subject will be considered as the test of their disposition to support the King's Government." This was the form in which it was notified that the matter was one of " Confidence," and that office-holders who did not support the Government would have to forfeit the posts which they had obtained on that condition. Sir John Parnell, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Fitzgerald, the Prime Serjeant, were the first to go, and John Claudius Beresford and George Knox, Commissioner of Revenue, followed.

A certain interest attaches to the dismissal from office of Sir John Parnell, as it led to one of the few by-elections that occurred while the Union was under discussion. It is a complaint, and a very obvious one, against Lord Castlereagh and the Irish Administration that no General Election was taken on the important question of the abolition of the separate Irish Parliament. Legally the objection has no weight, since, under our elastic constitution, a Parliament, so long as it is a Parliament, can do or undo anything it pleases. But that so fundamental and irre-

## TWO BY-ELECTIONS

vocable a step should have been taken without "consulting the people," as the modern phrase goes, would undoubtedly have been a scandal if the Irish House of Commons had possessed any real claim to represent the people. But things had not really altered in essentials since the Duke of Rutland wrote to Pitt that "the system of Parliament in this country does not bear the smallest resemblance to representation." The counties and the few open boroughs represented the views of the local magnates; the pocket boroughs, which controlled the balance on all occasions, simply represented the wishes of their proprietors. To talk about the will of the people in this connection is not convincing, and although it would have been more consistent with the proprieties to have gone through the form of an election, probably not a single vote in the House would have been influenced by the process.

It so happens, however, that two by-elections did take place at this time in open constituencies, and that the result in each case, for what it was worth, was decisively in favour of the Union. Isaac Corry had to seek re-election as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Catholic emancipation (1793) had sent the voters for Newry up from six or seven hundred to over two thousand—the new men being practically all Catholics. Under the direction of their Bishop, Dr. Lennan, these new voters declared so decidedly for Corry and the Union that his opponent dared not face the poll. "Mr. Ball, with his partisans," wrote the Bishop, to Dr. Troy, Archbishop of Dublin, "after canvassing the town for eight days, declined the poll and surrendered yesterday. The Catholics stuck together like the Macedonian phalanx, and with ease were able to

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

turn the scale in favour of the Chancellor of the Exchequer."

The other contest was in the County of Kerry—O'Connell's Kerry—Irish of the Irish, Catholic of the Catholic. In Cork, according to Wakefield, the emancipation of 1793 had increased the voters' list from 3000 to 20,000, and probably the proportionate growth in Kerry was much the same. It was represented by Maurice Fitzgerald, who bore the old title of Knight of Kerry. He was a young man, an honest and convinced Unionist, with no particular axe to grind. The Kerry Fitzgeralds and The O'Connells were closely allied. Both families, Fitzgerald tells us, were warm advocates of the Union, which was popular "among the gentry of both persuasions and the Roman Catholic population of Munster and Connaught." "Having accepted office," he says, "as a supporter of the Union, I went to two elections pending the measure, and was returned without opposition in a county where the Roman Catholic interest greatly preponderated, and a declaration almost unanimous in favour of the Union proceeded from the County of Kerry. . . . One of my most strenuous supporters in bringing forward that declaration was Mr. Maurice O'Connell, a gentleman of wealth, respectability and decided loyalty, uncle of Mr. Daniel O'Connell, and my most active partisan on the occasion was Mr. John O'Connell, brother of Mr. Daniel O'Connell."\* It has not been suggested that the result would have been different in any of the other southern and western counties—all overwhelmingly Catholic—if they had been appealed to. Cork, Kerry, Clare, Galway and Mayo voted solid for the Union, and

\* Quoted from Lecky, "Leaders of Public Opinion," ii. p. 5.

## BISHOP DILLON'S APPEAL

in no instance did the constituents censure their representatives in the following General Election.

No one will pretend to read the Irish peasant's mind at such a time. In his half-developed, half-emancipated state he certainly did not know it himself. But of the attitude of his "natural leaders," both lay and clerical, there can be no honest doubt whatever. The Catholic peers were, it may be admitted, rather a poor-spirited lot, but the Bishops knew what they wanted and spoke out very plainly about it. Two things they abhorred, "French principles" as illustrated by the Revolution, and the Irish Parliament as illustrated by its whole history throughout the century. They had once turned to Grattan, but they found Grattan and his Constitution rotten bulwarks against Jacobinism and rebellion, and before he disappeared Grattan, as we have seen, had ceased to be of any account in his own Parliament. Their eyes were turned to England for further liberation and not to College Green. Not the least remarkable of these ecclesiastics—men educated at the leading universities of France, Portugal or Spain—was Edward Dillon, Archbishop of Tuam. When the Bishops unanimously supported the Union, Grattan dubbed them "a band of prostituted men," and suggested that they were in the pay of the Government. He forgot or did not know that whilst he was out of the way in England, and before the Union had been introduced, most of the Bishops—some of them at danger of their lives—had spoken out with unqualified emphasis against the United Irishmen and their rebellion.

One of the most vigorous of these pronouncements had been made in an address by Dr. Dillon in April 1798, when he was still Bishop of Kilmac-

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

duagh and Kilfenora. “There is not one amongst you,” says the Bishop, “even in the most remote and obscure hamlet who hath not heard of the oaths and associations which have entailed so many misfortunes on various districts of this kingdom. How many poor exiles from northern counties have you seen arrive amongst you, set adrift without pity or remorse by a barbarous association? How many atrocities have you heard committed by persons belonging to societies of, if possible, a still more dangerous tendency? How many villages destroyed and districts laid waste in consequence of illegal oaths and conspiracies?

. . . They (the United Irishmen) look forward with anxious expectancy to the arrival of their brethren in impiety. They tell us with a malignant and ill-dissembled satisfaction, that we must not flatter ourselves with the hopes of escaping a visit from the French. I will not take upon myself to determine an event which as yet remains amidst the secrets of Providence. Obstacles of great violence lie in their way. I will not, however, hesitate to declare that the wrath of Heaven could scarcely visit us with a more dreadful scourge.”

The bishop then proceeds to give a brief but pungent summary of the iniquities of the Revolution with its pillage and profanation of churches, its carnage and slaughter, and its culminating outrage on “the Supreme Pastor of our Church”—that “old priest” who, Tone hoped, was only at the beginning of his troubles! And he adds, rising to something of prophetic strain: “In the meantime, let me conjure you through the precious blood of your Divine Redeemer, whose death we thus commemorate, to have mercy on yourselves, on your children, and on your country; to reject

## LORD ARRAN'S COLONY

with horror all clandestine oaths that may be imposed on you. As for my part it will be the pride of my life and the greatest consolation which I can enjoy here below, should I be in any degree instrumental in preserving you from the machinations of dangerous and designing men."

One very curious and suggestive point in this appeal is the Bishop's bundling together of United Irishmen, the French, the Peep-o'-day boys, the Orangemen, and the Ulster Presbyterians generally in one commination. Mr. Litton Falkiner\* in his essay on The French Invasion of Ireland, carries us a little further in this interesting development. In 1796-97 attempts were made to spread the United Irish movement in Mayo, but without much success. The exiled Catholics, driven out of Ulster to the cry of "to Connaught or to Hell with you," connected their persecution, not unnaturally, with Presbyterianism. Mr. Denis Brown, writing from Westport in 1796, informs the Government that "the inhabitants of this part of Mayo have connected the French and the Presbyterians of the north, who, they hear, invited the French over; consequently they have transferred a portion of their hatred to the enemy, who they are persuaded are coming with their northern allies to drive them from their habitations and properties." And here is the pitifully grotesque result: The Earl of Arran had, earlier in the century, planted a little colony of Presbyterian weavers at Multifarragh, near Killala. They worked and prospered quietly as is their wont, and Mr. Falkiner attributes to their skill with the loom the origin of those local industries "which in our own day have been fostered so successfully by the convents of Foxford." But

\* "Studies in Irish History," pp. 264 and 331.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

when the French arrived, and the rising duly took place, the Killala patriots set out and wrecked the little Presbyterian church, scattered and destroyed the colony, and drove out the minister—on the ground that the weavers were Orangemen—a body with whom they had as much to do as with the Committee of Public Safety!

When the trouble was over and the movement for the Union started, the Bishops, headed by Dr. Troy, Archbishop of Dublin, rallied warmly to it. In the Dublin Parliament they saw, in the words of Denys Scully,\* a leading Catholic layman, “not our Parliament, but their club-house,” and they were glad to assist at its demolition. The Government, it is clear, were not too anxious at first to elicit Roman Catholic approval of the Union, since it only made Foster and Parnell and Barrington and the Ascendancy men more bitter in their opposition. As Lord Cornwallis wrote to the Duke of Portland (December 5, 1798), after seeing Dr. Troy, Lord Fingall and Lord Kenmare, the Catholics were in favour of the Union “provided no bar to their future hopes is made a part of the measure. . . . An active support from that body would not perhaps be advantageous to the success of the Union. It would particularly increase the jealousy of the Protestants, and render them less inclined to the question.” The proviso regarding “future hopes,” naturally refers to the question of complete emancipation. Dundas and probably Pitt also had at first been in favour of making emancipation an integral part of the Act of Union. Then there were suggestions that there should be a public pledge that emancipation should follow

\* “An Irish Catholic’s Advice to his Brethren,” by Denys Scully (1803).

## GOVERNMENT DEFEATED

immediately after the Union. Finally, since either plan would raise enmities, it was agreed that the matter should not be referred to, the Catholic leaders being content with the well-known and strong views of Cornwallis, Castlereagh, and Pitt on the subject. To another correspondent Cornwallis writes at this time that the Catholic leaders had "greatly relieved his mind" by their decision. "The Catholics are for it," he says, "but they do not wish the question of the Catholics being admitted into the Representation to be agitated at this time as it would render the whole measure more difficult: they do not think the Irish Parliament capable of entering into a cool and dispassionate consideration of their case."

When Parliament met in January 1799, the Government were decidedly unlucky. Castlereagh was new to the management of the House, as was also Cornwallis, and many of their supporters were half-hearted. Ponsonby moved an amendment to the address, and was only beaten by a majority of one. Many of the Government's usual supporters remained away. It was a serious business for them—nothing less than the loss of their livelihood. Corruption and jobbery had been their meat and their drink from generation to generation, and if the House on College Green was closed, some of them might be reduced to earn an honest living. Lord Castlereagh's position was quite plain. The House was, as Swift had told it long ago, a "den of thieves," and the thieves had either to be fought or bought—there was no other way. A Cromwell would have done the work in a cleaner and honester way: "It is not fit you should sit here any longer: you should give place to better men: you are no Parliament." But the eighteenth

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

century did not breed Cromwells in England, and the tortuous and miry path had to be followed to the end.

Lord Castlereagh's plan was to recognise that the brigands held the path, and, since he had no authority to fight them, to buy them at their price—to use his own words, “to buy out and secure to the Crown for ever the fee simple of Irish corruption, which has so long enfeebled the powers of Government and endangered the connection.” It is very wrong to buy members of Parliament ; it is very wrong to be bought ; but—to fall back again on the authority of Macaulay—“we might as well accuse the lowland farmers who paid blackmail to Rob Roy of corrupting the virtue of the highlanders as accuse Sir Robert Walpole of corrupting the virtue of Parliament.” Three days later (January 25, 1799) the Government were defeated by a majority of four, and Cornwallis and Castlereagh, seeing that the measure was not to be carried with a rush, set themselves once more to the dirty task that had been accomplished by so many of their predecessors—that of buying a majority. Castlereagh was not a voluble man, and he set to work quietly and uncomplainingly. Cornwallis rent the air with his lamentations. He had already found his position one of “perfect misery” when trying to check the cruelty of Foster and Barrington and the Ascendency party ; now it had become still more odious.

The closeness of the majorities naturally raised the price of votes in the market, and the greedy crew fastened on the Chief Secretary and the Viceroy like leeches. “Their demands,” wrote Cornwallis to a friend, “rise in proportion to the appearance of strength on the other side, and you, who know how I detest a job, will be sensible of

## A “SHOCKING TASK”

the difficulties which I must often have to keep my temper. But the object is great, and perhaps the salvation of the British Empire may depend upon it. I shall, therefore, as much as possible, overcome my detestation of the work, and march on steadily to my point.” But four months later he was nearly at the end of his endurance : “The political jobbing of this country gets the better of me. I trust that I shall live to get out of this most cursed of all situations, and most repugnant to my feelings. How I long to kick those whom my public duty obliges me to court ! My occupation is to negotiate and job with the most corrupt people under heaven. I despise and hate myself every hour for engaging in such dirty work, and am supported only by the reflection that without a Union the British Empire must be dissolved.” And a few days later : “Nothing but a conviction that a Union is absolutely necessary could make me endure the shocking task which is imposed upon me.”

Some of the opinions enunciated by the Catholic Bishops during this critical year are very interesting, in view of their knowledge of the country. Dillon, whose strong views on the French Revolution and secret societies we have given, and who was now Archbishop of Tuam, wrote in September 1799, that during his last visitation he had had an opportunity of observing “how little averse the public mind” is to the idea of a Union, “and I have also had an opportunity of acquiring the strongest conviction that this measure alone can restore harmony and happiness to our unhappy country. If I can judge from appearances, the people are heartily sick of rebellion and French politics.” His neighbour, Dr. Bodkin, Bishop of

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

Galway, wrote to encourage the Government after its first reverse : "I am far from thinking the Union lost. . . . It is the only means left to save from ruin and destruction that poor and infatuated Ireland." Dr. Hussey, Bishop of Waterford, "rejoiced" at the Union, and declared that he would rather be under the Beys and the Mamelukes of Egypt than under "the iron rod of the Mamelukes of Ireland." Dr. Lennan, Bishop of Dromore, whom we have already seen helping the Unionist candidate to secure his seat at Newry, and the other Bishops ring the changes on the same note.

Cork, for some reason, was the most zealous and enthusiastic county in all Ireland for the Union. Jealous Dublin gossip would have it that Cork hoped, under the new system of free trade and industrial progress, to rival Dublin and become the commercial capital of Ireland. However that may be, every section of the community joined in supporting Cornwallis and Castlereagh. The Bishop, Dr. Moylan, was particularly emphatic. "I am perfectly satisfied," he says, "of the truth of the assertion that it is impossible to extinguish the feuds and animosities which disgrace this kingdom, nor give it the advantages of its natural local situation, without an Union with Great Britain. God grant that it may soon take place! The tranquillity and future welfare of this poor distracted country rests in a great measure thereon. The earlier it is accomplished the better. May God give a blessing to it!"

And when Cornwallis visited the City of Cork he was overwhelmed with friendly addresses. In accordance with the policy agreed on, Dr. Moylan, as "titular" Bishop, kept in the background, but there was a largely signed address from "the Catholic

## "THAT PROUD LEVIATHAN"

inhabitants of the city." Other addresses were from the High Sheriff and Grand Jury of the county ; from the High Sheriff and Grand Jury of the city ; from the Protestant Bishop and Clergy of Cork and Ross ; from the Mayor, Sheriffs, and Common Council of the city ; from the Provost, Burgesses, and Freemen of Bandon ; and from the Mayor, Burgesses, and Commonalty of Youghal. Representation in Parliament might have been a sham, but there could be no mistake about such unanimity as that. And when the Bill came up the two members for the county and the two members for the city all supported it.

In the South, in fact, the Viceroy, on an avowedly Union-promoting tour, was universally well received, and could report that everywhere the Union had "cordial approval." The Midlands, for some reason, were less friendly ; Dublin was raging and roaring—they were going to take their Parliament House over to England, was again the tale. The really critical spot was the North, and it proved a great surprise to Lord Cornwallis. County Down, it is true, was unapproachable, not at all, as might be supposed, because the United Irishmen had once been strong there, but because the new Marquis of Downshire was furiously jealous of Lord Castlereagh's growing fame, and was ready to oppose whatever his rival proposed. The Hills were a family of well-approved loyalty, and Lord Downshire's father, the first Marquis, was one of the earliest advocates of the Union, supporting it as early as 1756, and in 1786 speaking of it in the English House of Lords as "the best means of connecting and consolidating the interests of both kingdoms."

"I did not enter County Down," writes Cornwallis,

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

"lest that proud leviathan, Lord Downshire, should call it a declaration of war, but I was received with open arms in Belfast, and throughout the counties of Antrim and Derry the cry for a Union is almost unanimous. . . . At Antrim, Coleraine, Newtownlimavady, and all the places through which I passed addresses were presented, and the words 'principal inhabitants' were always inserted as well as the Corporation. At Londonderry my reception was cordial and flattering beyond expression ; the county as well as the city addressed ; the town was illuminated, and 'Success to the Union' resounded from every quarter."

But, in spite of all, the old objection against the Union will be raised that the majority in its favour was "bought." Yes ; it was bought, as every majority in the Irish Parliament for a century past had been bought. The majority was bought because it was there for sale, and there was no way round, except the Cromwellian or the Napoleonic. It was in this very autumn of 1799, by the way, while Castlereagh was completing his arrangements for ending the Irish Parliament, that Napoleon, on the "18th Brumaire," put an end to the Directory and to the Revolution in France. An "18th Brumaire" not being possible in Ireland, the old-established and ill-famed method of purchase had for the last time to be employed. But let us use a little knowledge and common sense even on this point. The idea that still prevails in debating societies and on popular platforms, that men were bought with bags of golden guineas, is, of course, nonsense. O'Connell, who never spoilt his case for the sake of a few ciphers to swell his statistics, put the sum at three millions, independent of the money paid for the expropriation of borough-

## THE “PRIMUM MOBILE”

owners. We wonder where he imagined the money came from. Except in popular romances millions are not handled in that way.

The corruption of course was carried out in the good old-fashioned way of peerages, sinecures, jobs, pensions, and the purchase of seats—these last a commodity with regular market quotations. Any one who has gone through the correspondence will remember that the Irish Executive at this very time, so far from handling millions, was abjectly in want even of a few thousands. Castlereagh and Cooke, in their letters to Portland and Pitt, are constantly begging for money—for the *primum mobile*, as Castlereagh in one of his few moments of levity calls it. But the sum total of all the funds acquired in that way would not have stopped the mouth of a single patriot with a conscience to sell and with a healthy appetite for public money.

These sums were wanted for the purposes of the ordinary secret service, for which object the English Treasury, to judge by some of the letters,\* was in the habit of advancing to Ireland £8000 or £10,000 a year. It is needless to say that every Government, then and now, has its secret service fund—a fund very parsimoniously dealt out, and which in no case allows of any margin for the purchase of members of Parliament. And that Ireland had no secret service fund of its own is apparent from a very interesting letter dating from the period when Eden was Chief Secretary. He is writing to England for money just as Castlereagh had to write, and he complains that one of the great wants of the Irish Government is a secret service fund similar to that existing in England and other countries. There was, he

\* For example, Cooke to Castlereagh, April 5, 1800.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

admitted, a small fund of £1200 to £2000 a year generally called by this name, but it was a misnomer, and it went in paying for extra packet-boats, illuminations, beer for the populace on public holidays, and such like trifles.

"In short," writes Eden,\* "as we have not the constitutional pretext of foreign service, we have not any means of carrying into Parliament a demand for a sum without accounting for its uses. The mischief which has long resulted from this circumstance is not to be described, and in the present state of the country the wise application of about £3000 a year might be of a degree of importance to his Majesty's affairs beyond what words can estimate." Eden's idea was that the money was to be applied "to his Majesty's service and the effective conduct of Government." Now, in 1798–1799–1800 what had Castlereagh—quite apart from the "management" of Parliament—to do for "his Majesty's service and the effective carrying on of Government"? He had the remains of the Rebellion, with the active threat of another French invasion, to attend to, and for this he required a body of informers and spies in Ireland, in Hamburg, and in France. He had the Press to look after, and at that time every newspaper in Dublin looked to the Castle or to the Opposition for its support. The Opposition at this very time were boasting that they had raised £100,000 for the purpose of opposing the Union. Seats, again, were expensive, It was a common complaint that a seat for a "close" borough that had cost but little early in the century had risen to £3000 in 1793 and to £4000 in 1799.

\* Eden to Hillsborough (most secret), July 1781. Quoted from Lecky, ii. 267. The whole subject is discussed exhaustively by the same writer in a later volume, v. 307.

## THE PURCHASE OF BOROUGHS

This was for a Parliament. They could be bought by the session, by the Parliament, or purchased outright in "fee simple," as Castlereagh ultimately had to do. When a needy member supporting the Government was put to the expense of a contest, the Government had to find the £3000 or £4000, as the case might be ; and when, at the last crisis, Grattan's friends thought that his presence in Parliament would be of service to their cause, they purchased a seat for him in Wicklow and had to pay £2400 for only a few weeks' use of it ! A seat was bought or sold in those days openly, and as a doctor would buy or sell a practice or a tradesman a business "goodwill." No one thought or spoke of corruption in the matter.

But there was still another—and perhaps the most important—object for which money was urgently needed by Castlereagh. Here, again, there was no secrecy. He mentions it openly in one of his letters as a matter of course. Nowadays, when a great cause has to be promoted or resisted, the matter is taken in hand by outside organisations. Unionists and Liberals, Brewers and Teetotalers, Free Traders and Tariff Reformers, and a score of others, all have their organisations, their speakers, their pamphleteers, and what not. Money by the hundred thousand is spent in this way at every general election. In the eighteenth century nothing of the sort was in existence, and when the arguing had to be done Government had to pay for it. The war in 1799 was largely carried on by pamphlets—and pamphlets of remarkable ability some of them are. Speeches by Pitt and lesser men were circulated in tens of thousands, and Castlereagh had to find the money. It so happens that in the same letter in which he makes his appeal

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

for the *primum mobile* as an “absolute necessity,” he explains the situation very simply. Without money, he says, “we cannot give that activity to the Press that is requisite. We have good materials amongst the young barristers, but we cannot expect them to waste their time and starve into the bargain.”

What, then, was really done? We have seen “Satan’s invisible world displayed” so often in tracing down this story from Lord Townshend’s time that there is really no ground for mystery or for misunderstanding. First there was the unending and insatiable demand for titles, from the Duke of Leinster down. Then there were the offices—real offices where work was done—from that of the Attorney-General (who practically ran the Government along with the Chief Secretary) down to gaugers and tax-collectors. Then there were the jobs and sinecures—“Single-Speech Hamilton” was Chancellor of the Exchequer for life; the Duke of Leinster was Master of the Rolls; Ponsonby was Postmaster; Hely Hutchinson was everything that could be got, from “Alnager” to “Customer of Strangford.” Finally there were “pensions” for which no offices or services were suggested, and a horde of petty employments down to tide-waiterships and land-waiterships at places which those who drew the salaries could not find on the map. These were the things for which members fought and cringed and bullied and snarled.

But once more there is a large deduction to be made. Even in the worst of Parliaments all the members were not corrupt. Probably at least half the members of the Irish Parliament sat and voted honestly according to their consciences on one side or the other, and neither asked for nor accepted

## THE STATE OF EUROPE

favours. Even in Sir John Blaquier's Black List, so admirably edited by Mr. Hunt,\* there are many entries indicating men of this sort. Robert Stewart, Lord Castlereagh's father, member for County Down, is "always against," and Charles Powell Leslie, member for Hillsborough, "a friend of Government, has asked nothing"—two men on opposite sides with no suggestion that they were, or could be, "got at" by Government. But in addition there was, as there had been in the Scottish Parliament, a *squadrone volante* with whom at recurring intervals the Minister-in-Charge had to arrange for "gratifications." In Lord Castlereagh's case these do not seem to have been very much larger than in Lord Townshend's.

The figures as shown in the division lists speak for themselves. When the Union was mooted at the beginning of 1799 the Government was left on a crucial division in a minority of 5—106 for and 111 against. A year later, on the motion to consider the Viceroy's message, the Government majority was 43—158 for and 115 against.† In other words, a year's "management" had resulted in an addition of 52 to the Government's strength and of 4 to that of the Opposition. This is what O'Connell and his friends spoke of as the purchase of a patriotic Parliament by "foreign gold." What will be noticed is that the Opposition figures remained pretty constant—111 in 1798 and 115 in 1799. The "flying squadron"—the men who were there for money or money's worth and who saw that they had it—stood out for the highest terms, and when

\* "The Irish Parliament, 1775," edited by William Hunt.

† There were, of course, many divisions, and the figures, even for the same division, often differ in different authorities. But the above may be taken as fairly giving the strength of parties.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

they had got them they came in quietly and voted as usual, as they and their fathers before them had done. That is the precise arithmetical total of the “base and blackguardly” tactics of Pitt and Cornwallis and Castlereagh.

As for the quiet country gentlemen and others who voted with the Government now as they had done before, on conviction and principle and without favours asked for or accepted, why did they vote for this Union? No doubt most of them were rather proud of their Parliament and regretted its disappearance. But they knew in their hearts that it had been a failure and had become a danger to Ireland and to the Empire. Fitzgibbon’s oft-quoted warning on the Regency dispute had come home to them: “The only security of your liberty is the connection with Great Britain, and gentlemen who risk breaking the connection must make up their minds to a Union. God forbid I should ever see that day; but if the day comes on which a separation shall be attempted, I shall not hesitate to embrace a Union rather than a separation.” And when the taunt that all the supporters of the Union had been “bought by the Minister” was made in the House, a very independent and obstinate gentleman, Mr. William Johnson, member for Philips-town, gave a worthy retort\*: “No, Sir; I will tell you what has bought them—the state of the country and the state of Europe. What has bought them has bought me. Unacquainted with the Minister, the Castle or its followers, I took up the question of an incorporate Union. I took it up in the bosom of privacy and retirement; it was forced on me by the growing calamities of the country, and I deliberated on it, uninfluenced by

\* House of Commons, February 14, 1800.

## "RARE UNANIMITY"

a single motive other than an anxious desire to meet the peculiar evils by which we were afflicted."

Johnson's reference to "the state of the country and the state of Europe" sends us back once more to Lord Rosebery, who treats that branch of the subject with easy mastery. The emergency, he says, was great. It was for England "a struggle between existence and extinction." "We formed the main object of an enemy who had conquered half Europe. Thrice had that enemy invaded Ireland, and it was certain that an invasion of England was only a question of time. In so appalling a crisis a new arrangement had, by the admission of all parties, to be formed for Ireland. Grattan himself had tacitly given up his own Parliament, for he had withdrawn from it and encouraged the discussion of Irish affairs in the British Legislature. What wonder, then, if, from the natural tendency to draw closer and closer and closer yet, in the presence of an overpowering danger, men's minds should have turned with rare unanimity to the idea of a Union? . . . What would happen if in war, as on the Regency question, the British Parliament should take one side and the Irish Parliament the other? . . . Internal free trade would give Ireland material prosperity, but without a Union the British commercial classes would not hear of any such arrangement. Neither Catholic relief nor internal free trade would in the then temper of men's minds have had a chance of acceptance in England, so long as they were made to the independent Parliament of a hostile nation. But on Catholic relief and on internal free trade Pitt's mind was set."

As bearing, although very remotely, on the question of corruption, the matter of the com-

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

pensation voted to the owners of extinguished boroughs ought perhaps to be mentioned. Eighty-four boroughs were abolished, and, after due inquiry and calculation, compensation was voted by Parliament to the “owners” of these boroughs at the rate of £15,000 each, or £7500 for the half-borough. This is not a proviso for which we should look in a modern Reform Bill, but it is rather futile to use the phrases of to-day when talking of the affairs of a past century. Pocket boroughs had at the time a recognised value. They were bought and sold, and were demised and transferred as part of the property. We have seen that when Grattan wanted a seat in this very year, it was bought for him as a matter of course. There was no other way, for there was, in these boroughs, no electorate to appeal to. The principle of compensation in such cases had been frequently recognised, and had been approved of by men whose principles were above suspicion. The “Heritable Jurisdictions” in the Highlands of Scotland were not realisable property, yet when they were abolished in the course of the pacification after the Rising of 1745, compensation was given to the chiefs for the loss of a somewhat onerous privilege and dignity.

Burke also defended the principle of compensation in such cases, and declared, in expounding his own Reform scheme, that he would not suffer “any man or description of men to suffer from errors that naturally have grown up with the abusive constitution of those offices which I propose to regulate.” Even as regards sinecures, he said that “these places and others of the same kind that are held for life have been considered as property ; they have been given as a provision for children ; they have been the subject of family settlements ; they have

## GRATTAN'S REAPPEARANCE

been the security of creditors. What the law respects shall be sacred to me." Pitt when, at the height of his reforming ardour, he introduced his reform scheme in the House of Commons, proposed a fund for the buying out of proprietors' rights in rotten boroughs which would have worked out at the rate of over £25,000 per borough. The sum of £15,000 allotted for each Irish borough disfranchised can therefore hardly be regarded as exorbitant. Grattan himself in 1797 had stated that the price of boroughs ran from £14,000 to £16,000.

But whether the principle, even in those days, was a good one or a bad one, whether the sum awarded was too much or too little, one thing certain is that in no shape or form can the buying up of these seats be regarded as bribery. The essence of a bribe surely is that it shall be secret, that it shall be corrupt, and that it shall be paid and accepted on the understanding that the briber's aim shall be gained. Not one of these essential conditions was present in the case of the Irish boroughs. The money was voted in a public Act of Parliament—the number voting against it never exceeding seven—and the sum given to opponents of the Union was the same as that given to its supporters. Even in Ireland Ministers do not bribe members to vote against them. Lord Castlereagh and the Government had no more inveterate and determined opponents than the Duke of Leinster, the Marquis of Downshire, Lord Granard, Lord Belmore, Lord Charlemont, Parnell, Ponsonby, and Foster. They all voted, worked, and spoke against the Union, and yet they received a total of £185,000—bribery to vote against the Union, are we to assume? In fact, about one-third of the compensation voted went to anti-Unionists. So much for perhaps the

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

foolishest of the many foolish fables retailed about the wind-up of the Irish Parliament.

Grattan, who, as he said, had sat by its cradle, was determined to celebrate fittingly the death of the independent Irish Parliament. Flood and Grattan had for years disputed the succession to the mantle of Chatham. The fashion in which Chatham's gout came and went, as political effect was desired, specially attracted them, and each in turn tried it on the Irish House. In Grattan's supreme effort at denunciation, when he annihilated Flood with his invective, he spoke of his opponent, who had asked the indulgence of the House on the ground of illness, as "aping the manners and affecting the infirmities of Lord Chatham." But now Flood was dead, and Grattan elaborated a scene to rival Chatham's swan-song on the floor of the House of Lords. Chatham, theatrical and affected as he was, was, however, in reality a dying man when he spoke, whereas Grattan was in the prime of life, with still twenty good years before him. So that it is not surprising to learn, on the friendly authority of Lord Cornwallis's biographer, that, though the scene was well got up, the trick was too palpable and produced little effect. He appealed for leave to speak sitting, but he soon forgot his infirmities and spoke for two hours with all his usual force and vigour. Foster, too, went through a moving scene on putting the final question, but his record as an arch-coercionist and reactionary does not somehow lend strength to the tableau.

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The Irish Parliament died because it had degenerated to that stage when, like the Roman Empire, "it could no longer sustain either its diseases or their remedy." If the Union had come

## PITT BETRAYED

earlier in the eighteenth century, Ireland would have participated, moderately and sanely, in the wave of liberalism and toleration that spread over England in the second half of that century. As the “curse of mischance” would have it, she came into the British circle just at the moment when that wave had spent itself, and when the demons of intolerance and bigotry, political and religious, were again in the ascendant for a generation. The bathos of the descent from Pitt to Addington needs no emphasis. To Pitt and Castlereagh the Union was not so much a policy as the basis upon which a great constructive and healing Irish policy should be built. As Lord Cornwallis, one of the most enlightened, tolerant, and broadminded men who ever occupied Dublin Castle, put it : “The word ‘Union’ will not cure the ills of this wretched country. It is a necessary preliminary ; but a great deal more remains to be done.” Complete Catholic emancipation, together with some decent provision for the clergy of the two leading non-established Churches, was one item. The Roman Catholic Bishops and clergy were to receive a regular stipend, the Bishops, as in most European countries, to be appointed subject to Royal veto ; whilst the Presbyterian clergy were to be put in the position of members of the Church of Scotland from which they sprang. There was also to be a thorough reform of the system of tithes, which oppressed the agricultural classes—two reforms that would have saved Ireland a generation of civil war and would in all probability have obviated entirely the Repeal agitation.

But Pitt and Castlereagh reckoned without treacherous colleagues and a King whose suspicion had been inflamed by those colleagues to the point of insanity. Pitt had not the art of making friends. He was

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

so distant and assumed such a demeanour with some of his own colleagues that they were often in semi-revolt. In the Rutland correspondence there are several letters from members of Parliament complaining that the majority, even in 1785, was being alienated owing to this cause. He formed his decisions upon principle, and then expected colleagues and followers to obey. "This system of Pitt's," writes Pulteney to the Duke of Rutland, "to act upon great general ideas of the propriety of a measure without knowing the opinion of the House at the time, must, I can see, involve him in time in difficulties." And again; "From having no immediate intercourse with the generality of the House of Commons, he is as ignorant of their opinions on particular questions as if he was the Minister of another country. . . . His living and conversing with a very small circle and acting only on abstract general principles will, I can see, involve him at some time or other in difficulties." And Castlereagh had precisely the same quality—strength or weakness as we may choose to regard it. "I heard at Holland House the other day," says Macaulay, "that Sir Philip Francis said that though he hated Pitt, he must confess there was something fine in seeing how he maintained his post by himself: 'The lion walks alone, the jackals herd together.' "

The Union Bill was carried in July. Castlereagh went over to London and consulted with the Prime Minister as to the details of their constructive Irish policy. But, all unsuspecting, they had been doubly betrayed. Some one, probably Lord Clare, was working on the King's conscience from Ireland, and had involved Stuart, the Primate of Ireland, in the intrigue. Simultaneously Loughborough, the new English Chancellor, probably the meanest

## THE VICEROYALTY

man who ever attained the Woolsack, had betrayed Pitt's private correspondence to the King. And he, too, brought in Moore, Archbishop of Canterbury. Between them they drove the poor King nearly mad again. He stormed against the Irish proposals, which should still have been a Cabinet secret. Pitt then put his proposals formally before the King ; the King asked him to drop them and say nothing more, and Pitt, finding himself in a minority in his own Cabinet, instantly resigned, his example being followed by Castlereagh. "And so," says Lord Rosebery, "all went wrong. The measure of Union stood alone. . . . All that man could do was done to obliterate the rest of Pitt's policy. Addington's Irish Government went over with express instructions to do nothing for the Catholics, nothing for the Dissenters, but to push and promote the Established Church in every way. The Union alone remained even to indicate what Pitt's plan had been, and that was a misleading indication." And the King boasted that he had "shut the door on the Catholic claims for ever."

Worst of all from the point of view of administrative reform, instead of making a clean sweep and placing Ireland under a Secretary of State, the maimed and truncated scheme left untouched the Castle and the Viceroyalty, which in the hands of Addington and his nominees perpetuated the old bad system which it had been the intention of Pitt and Cornwallis and Castlereagh to wipe out and obliterate for ever. Fifty years later Lord John Russell,\* in bringing in a belated Bill for the abolition of this anachronism, stated that the Viceroyalty was never intended to be a permanent office. "At the time of the Union," he said,

\* House of Commons, May 17, 1850.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

"Ministers wished to abolish the Viceroyalty, but George III., in a letter to Addington, declared that it was necessary 'at present' to retain it." Only seventeen members voted against Lord John Russell's most desirable reform, but "the curse of mischance" had not yet finished with Ireland. The Government majority was dislocated on some side issue before the Bill was passed, and Lord Clarendon, who, as Russell said, "went over to Ireland on the distinct understanding" that he was to be the last Viceroy, has had a long line of successors. "It was," says Lord Rosebery, speaking of the original mistake, "like cutting the face out of a portrait and leaving the picture in the frame. The fragment of policy flapped forlornly on the deserted mansions of the capital, but there was enough to remind men of what had been."

Later on Pitt and Castlereagh came back to power, but the chance had been missed. Their ideas and hopes regarding Ireland remained unchanged, but the King was immovable, and Pitt had either to see the external affairs of the Empire at a terrible emergency in the hands of incompetent men, or surrender his liberal policy as regards Ireland. He chose the Empire, and he could have done nothing else. But it was a pity. At any rate, no one of the statesmen who took part in the final struggle over the Irish Parliament was in a position to throw stones at another, for they all shifted their ground; or, as they would have said, circumstances changed, and they changed with them. Foster and Plunket, extremest of the extreme, both accepted the Union and accepted office under it. Pitt accepted office and headed a Ministry pledged not to bring in Catholic emancipation. And Fox did much the same during his

## CHANGES OF FRONT

brief tenure of office in 1806, for when he was asked to take up Repeal of the Union he replied that although he adhered to all that he had said, still "however bad the measure had been, an attempt to repeal it without the most urgent solicitation from the parties interested should not be made, and hitherto none such had come within his knowledge."

Only four years later Grattan himself joined in the retreat. Asked in September 1810, to take up Repeal, he said that "a proposition of that sort, to be either prudent or possible, must wait until it shall be called for and backed by the nation." And again: "My sentiments remain unchanged. . . . The marriage, however, having taken place [between Ireland and England], it is now the duty, as it ought to be the inclination, of every individual to render it as fruitful, as profitable, and as advantageous as possible."<sup>\*</sup> And in his first speech in the House of Commons, after recounting the good work of the early days of "Grattan's Parliament," he adds: † "You will exceed it and I shall rejoice. I call my countrymen to witness if in that business I compromised the claims of my country or temporised with the power of England; but there was one thing which baffled the effort of the patriot and defeated the wisdom of the senator—it was the folly of the theologian."

In a few years, in fact, there was a complete transformation scene. Nearly all the leading parliamentarians who had protested so bitterly against the Union had either actively accepted and approved it or had tacitly ceased to oppose it. And then arose an opponent out of the heart of that

\* Lecky, "Leaders of Public Opinion," i. 702.

† Dict. Nat. Biog., tit. Grattan, p. 423.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

stauchly Unionist county of Kerry and that enthusiastically Unionist family of whom we have heard from the Knight of Kerry.\* Daniel O'Connell took up the question of Repeal and pressed it by methods that were distressing to Grattan, who said that when O'Connell paraded the grievances of Ireland "he omitted the greatest grievance—himself." He accused him of "venting against Great Britain the most disgusting calumny" and of "making politics a trade to serve his desperate and interested purposes." "It is," he added (somewhat prophetically perhaps), "the part of a bad man to make use of grievances as instruments of power and render them the means of discontent without a single honest attempt at redress." †

But perhaps the most detailed and complete repudiation of pre-Unionist mistakes was that made by Plunket, an orator scarcely second to Grattan himself, an opponent of the Union and an assailant of Castlereagh even more bitter than his leader. "For my own part," he said, in opposing the Union, "I will resist it to the last gasp of my existence and with the last drop of my blood; and when I feel the hour of my dissolution approaching I will, like the father of Hannibal, take my children to the altar and swear them to eternal hostility against the invaders of their country's freedom." When, however, the fumes of rhetoric had subsided and Plunket was able to look on the interests of his country through a clearer medium, he said:‡ "As an Irishman I opposed that Union. As an Irishman I admit that I did so openly and boldly. Nor am I now ashamed of what I then did. But though

\* See p. 286.

† Lecky, "Leaders of Public Opinion," ii. 24.

‡ Plunket, "Life," ii. 104.

## GRATTAN'S "DYING REQUEST"

in my resistance to it I had been prepared to go the length of any man, I am now equally prepared to do all in my power to render it close and indissoluble. . . . During the time that I have sat in the United Parliament I have found every question that related to the interests or security of my country entertained with indulgence and treated with the most deliberate regard."

And on another occasion Plunket was careful to withdraw from the extreme and acrimonious attitude he had taken up with regard to Lord Castlereagh.\* After expressing his sense of the "friendship and confidence" extended to him by Castlereagh, he went on: "And I can truly add that my unreserved reliance on the cordiality of his feelings towards me, joined to my perfect knowledge of the wisdom and liberality of all his public objects and opinions, were the principal causes which induced me to accept the honour which was proposed to me."

At the end even Grattan himself recognised the folly and wrongheadedness of the attacks on Castlereagh and the Union. To his son he said: "If you get into the House of Commons I must beg you not to attack Lord Castlereagh. The Union is past, the business between him and me is over, and it is for the interest of Ireland that Castlereagh should be Minister. I must beg you again not to attack him, and I make it my dying request."

The detailed history of the Union still remains to be written. In 1811 Castlereagh urged his former secretary, Alexander Knox, a man of remarkable and original mind, to undertake the work of writing a history that should "dispel the unwholesome mists that overhang the Union." The opportunity

\* Litton Falkiner, "Studies in Irish History," p. 205.

## THE END OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

was lost, the materials are scattered, and the time is now past when such a complete work could be written. But enough remains, at any rate, to clear away a vast mass of misleading declamation and defamation, and to place in their true light the record of the Irish Parliament and the causes of its fall.

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